

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Workers in Cuba increase their management role

— PAGES 8-9

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U.S. seizes passports of 3 youth back from Cuba

BY LAURA GARZA

On January 21 and 22 U.S. Customs agents in Chicago confiscated the passports of three youth who returned from a reporting trip to Cuba. The three were participants in an international youth brigade that brought together 70 young workers and students from the United States, Britain, Canada, Iceland, Mexico, and Sweden to see Cuba for themselves and report their findings upon their return.

Dannen Vance, 27, of Des Moines, Iowa, was held and interrogated on January 21 along with Sukul Baul, 21, of Bloomington, Illinois. Aislinn Pulley, 15, of Chicago, was also interrogated at the airport when she arrived a day later. Baul, Vance, and Pulley were on editorial assignments for the *Daily Vivette*, the *Valley Courier*, and *Family Matters* respectively.

Participants in the brigade have launched a campaign to protest the passport seizures and demand their immediate return.

"The recent passport seizures are a direct attack by the U.S. government on First Amendment rights, free speech, freedom of the press, and freedom to travel," said a statement released by organizers of the brigade. "This attack, if unanswered, can create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation for those who want to go to Cuba to find out for themselves and report on what is happening in that country today," the statement added.

"All the participants in the brigade were on editorial assignment from campus or community newspapers, or other media," stated Ken Riley, a brigade organizer. "Many of us have been active in groups defending Cuba."

Customs officials in Chicago claimed any visit to Cuba was in violation of current regulations, which block most U.S. citizens from being able to travel to the island. Riley reported that dozens of other brigade participants reentered the United States without incident. Forty-nine youth from the United States took part in the brigade.

Washington prohibits U.S. residents
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Gold miner convicted in Yellowknife frame-up

BY NED DMYTRYSHYN
AND SUSAN BERMAN

After a 15-week trial, a jury found Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) member Roger Warren guilty of second-degree murder January 19. The frame-up conviction on nine counts of murder stems from a September 1992 explosion at Royal Oak's Giant Mine during a bitter 18-month strike in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. Nine replacement workers were killed in the blast. Warren, who pleaded not guilty, is appealing the verdict.

Continued on Page 14

Marches across Canada condemn gov't cutbacks

BY GRANT HARGRAVE

MONTREAL — Thousands of students across Canada responded to a call for a National Day of Strike and Action January 25 against the Axworthy Reforms. The so-called reforms, introduced by federal government human resources minister Lloyd Axworthy, are in reality part of a wide-ranging attack on educational and social-service funding. Student, labor, and other organizations across the country supported the anti-cutback actions. Demonstrations and strikes took place from Halifax, Nova Scotia, on the east coast to Victoria, British Columbia, in the west.

In Montreal, students converging on the federal government offices in Place Guy-Favreau were greeted by workers on strike against Ogilvy Flour Mill. The strikers lead the students in chanting "So, so, solidarité" (solidarity, a popular chant among French-speaking strikers in Quebec), and "Workers, students, solidarity."

The demonstrators marched and chanted to several universities in downtown. Students from both English- and French-speaking schools rallied and cheered together in both languages. Picket signs, most of them homemade, said, "endettement à vie" (in debt for life), and "Don't break students, brake Axworthy." Along the route waves and honking horns testified to the opposition to government cuts and support for student demands among many working people.

Meetings were held in some CEGEPs (junior colleges) in the morning to vote on the one-day strike. At CEGEP St-Laurent several hundred students voted to walk out then headed downtown to join the demon-



Students march in downtown Toronto January 25 protesting large funding cuts proposed by the Canadian government. The cuts are part of a wide-ranging attack on the social wage of all working people. In Montreal, striking flour mill workers joined the students, chanting "Solidarité!"

stration. At CEGEP du Vieux Montréal, student union officials prevented a strike vote, but students fanned out through the college to convince others to leave their classes and join in the action.

Up to 10,000 people demonstrated in Montreal. At a concluding rally representatives of student and other organizations urged participants to attend the February 12 demonstration in Montreal against the cutbacks that has been called by the three main union federations in Quebec.

Some 2,000 students rallied at the University of Toronto and marched to Ryerson Polytechnic where students from Ryerson, York University, and high schools brought the crowd to about 5,000. The

demonstrators proceeded to Toronto City Hall joining 6,000-8,000 people.

In Vancouver, 5,000 people — mostly university, college, and high school students — marched on January 25. Many campuses organized lunch-hour rallies, with more than 1,000 students at several of them, before converging in downtown Vancouver. During the spirited march, students, stopped in front of banks and corporate offices to demonstrate where the wealth to fund education could be found. The youth chanted, "They say cutback, we say fightback," and cheered loudly when it was announced that 6,000 students were demonstrating in Victoria in front of the provincial legislature.

'Our bodies, our lives, our right to decide!': 2,500 join Boston march



Boston-area high school and college students joined abortion rights march. Meanwhile, the federal government is refusing to provide adequate protection of clinics.

BY LAURA GARZA
AND KAREN RAY

BOSTON — "Our bodies, our lives, our right to decide!" and "Keep abortion safe, legal, and funded," chanted nearly 2,500 marchers who gathered in Boston January 22 to defend abortion rights and demand protection for clinics and clinic workers.

The demonstration was called following the shootings at two Boston-area clinics December 30, which left clinic workers Shannon Lowney and Leann Nichols dead, and five others wounded.

"I think this demonstration will show people we won't accept this and we have a voice," said Sarah Tyson, a student from the College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor, Maine. "We will go as far as necessary to protect our rights."

"It's really important to show where we stand," added Julie Berberian. Eighteen students who plan to form a group on their

Continued on Page 5



Students end strike in Paris after administration backs down

Some 1,000 students ended a four-day occupation of the main lecture hall at "Science Po," the political science college in Paris, January 19. The occupation and a boycott of classes forced the school administration to abandon a proposal to replace grants for low income students with interest-free loans, to be repaid when graduates entered the workforce.

Wage deal nixed in Denmark

The Danish Employers' Association vetoed a 7.2 percent pay increase January 19 for 15,000 workers, which was agreed to by one of its member organizations. The bosses said the settlement was too expensive, countering with a proposed agreement containing a 5.5 percent pay hike over 2 years instead.

The Special Workers' Union, which represents the warehouse and dock workers and drivers, said it would not re-open pay negotiations.

Strike threatened in Germany

IG Metall, which represents 3.6 million workers in Germany, threatened to take strike action if a wage agreement is not reached with employers. A spokesperson for the union said, "They want to keep costs down, but wages should not be kept down as well." The union is demanding a 6 percent pay hike, which the employers labeled "utterly unrealistic."

Working people in Germany face new assaults on their wage earnings from recent tax hikes and insurance deductions.

Russian company shuts plants

The Russian auto company, Zil, closed its 12 plants January 17. The directors of the enterprise say there is no money to buy parts. The company was sold to private investors in 1992 and its general director said "we will have to discuss nationalization of the plant" if no solution is found to the crisis.

The company "restructured" its production, reducing the workforce from 120,000 to 85,000 with plans to eventually cut it down to 65,000 workers. Last year, production dropped to 55,000 vehicles, down from a high of 208,000 eight years ago.



Some 250 mostly young people rallied at the court house in Bronx, New York, January 16. The protesters demanded indictments of cops involved in the death of Anthony Baez who was strangled in an outlawed chokehold on December 22.

Cease-fire ignored in Bijac

Bosnian vice president Ejup Ganic called for an end to the United Nations arms embargo as renewed fighting broke out in the northern enclave of Bijac. A fragile truce between the Bosnian forces and Serbs led by Radovan Karadzic is disintegrating. Sarajevo ordered UN troops to leave the Tuzla airfield by February 1. The Bosnian army confined UN troops to their bases to protest a United Nations decision to install a Serb liaison officer at the airport.

Beijing warns U.S. automakers

The Chinese government threatened to suspend talks and deny U.S. automakers access to its car market, if Washington imposes punitive tariffs on up to \$1 billion in Chinese exports. Beijing and Washington are in a bitter trade dispute over claims of copyright piracy of compact discs, computer software, and videos in China.

The Big Three — Chrysler, GM, and Ford — are nervous about being shut out

of a growing market. "We are concerned," said James Paulsen, president of Ford China operations. European rivals, companies like Volkswagen, Peugeot, and Citroen, with production facilities already in China, have a leg up on U.S. carmakers.

China gov't tries to blunt protest

The Dalian city government in China gave special payments of \$23 to workers victimized in a loan scandal and those losing their jobs at bankrupt state-owned enterprises. Some retired workers were holding daily protests outside the city hall.

The mayor of Dalian announced January 6, plans to dissolve two state-owned companies in 1995, including a textile plant of 6,000 workers. More than 20 percent of state-owned enterprises in Dalian are beyond salvaging because of accumulated massive losses, according to city officials.

Tel Aviv strafes Lebanon

Israeli Cobra gunship helicopters raked a group of villages with artillery in southern Lebanon, January 20. The strafing came after a clash between Palestinians and Israeli troops a day earlier left seven Palestinians dead. Israeli gunners blasted the targeted villages with 155mm howitzers and 120mm mortar fire.

World TB epidemic looms

Up to 30 million people could die worldwide of tuberculosis in the 1990s if measures to control the spread of the deadly disease are not improved, according to a report from the World Health Organization. Between 1986 and 1991 global occurrence of the disease climbed almost 21 percent. The report projects a continued sharp increase in deaths in the

second half of the decade, on top of an estimated 2.5 million people who died of the disease in 1990.

The regions of Southeast Asia, the western Pacific, and Africa have borne the brunt of the epidemic. According to the report TB causes more than one-quarter of the avoidable deaths in those parts of the world.

Capitalist family squeezes Brazil

The Dart family filed a \$63 million lawsuit against the Brazilian government attempting to force Brasilia to speed up payments on \$1.4 billion in loans. The wealthy clan also wants to collect some \$60 million in interest payments.

The suit was filed in 1994 after the government of Brazil restructured \$43 billion in commercial debt.

Accusations of cop abuse on rise

Accusations of cop brutality increased more than 41 percent last year, according to New York City's Civil Board of Complaints. While the board reported a lower index of crime and arrests, complaints of excessive use of force increased from 2,173 in 1993 to 3,072 in 1994. Police officials explained that they anticipated the increase of complaints because of more aggressive procedures approved by the city's top cop, William Briton, last year.

U.S. poverty rising

The number of people in the United States living below the poverty level increased from 38 million in 1992 to 39.3 million in 1993, according to a report from the U.S. Department of Commerce. This was the fourth straight year that the number of destitute people increased, as the country's poverty rate of 15.1 percent remained the same. Meanwhile, the yearly earnings of full-time workers declined for women and men. The report noted that in metropolitan areas of 1 million or more people, the real median income of households dropped 3.2 percent from \$27,498 in 1992 to \$26,622 in 1993.

Judge cites California prison

A California federal judge cited the Pelican Bay State Prison, a maximum security unit, for abuse of inmates January 12. The ruling, which stemmed from inmates fighting to improve conditions, charged guards with attacking prisoners in their cells with high-voltage taser guns, rubber bullets, and batons. Inmates were bound for hours in "fetal restraints," and regularly locked up for more than 22 hours a day with nothing to do. Prison officials followed a policy of massive "force for the purpose of punishment." The windowless unit houses 3,600 inmates.

In another prison development, state authorities in California declared emergency regulations prohibiting guards from shooting at unarmed inmates involved in fist fights, a routine practice resulting in at least 27 prisoners shot to death in the years 1989 to 1994.

— MAURICE WILLIAMS

THE MILITANT

Defend the Cuban revolution

Upcoming issues of the 'Militant' will continue to feature articles providing on-the-scene coverage of developments in Cuba. The paper's in-depth analysis of the debates and discussions among Cuba's workers, farmers, and youth helps arm supporters of the revolution around the world.

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Japan quake: capitalists affix minimal value to human life

BY PAT SMITH

"Through Kobe's Rubble, An Economic Rainbow," read a *New York Times* headline the day after more than 5,000 people were killed and hundreds of thousands left homeless by an earthquake in Japan's sixth largest city. The big-business daily speculated hefty profits could be made rebuilding the city. The tremor ripped through Kobe January 17, heaving trains and highways on their sides, toppling buildings, and igniting fires that charred the city of 1.5 million.

Mounting concern over the long-term impact on the economy, and political instability due to government inaction when the quake hit, contributed to a 5.6 percent drop in Tokyo's stock market January 23.

The Japanese government was criminally slow to respond with needed supplies, and waited until a day after the disaster to send the military to help locate trapped survivors and deal with the rubble.

The quake disproportionately devastated working-class areas of the city, where cheaply built wooden frame houses predominate. The solidly constructed homes of the wealthy fared much better.

"The authorities haven't done anything," Yoshio Oka, left homeless by the quake, told *Mainichi*. "If we continue to rely on them, we'll starve to death." The newspaper reported that Kobe city officials provided nothing to drink and only 100 rice balls to be shared among the 1,000 displaced people at the school where Oka was staying. "Stop flying those choppers overhead for the stupid media," said Hiroshi Yoda, a construction worker. "Give us one and we'll fly in" supplies.

Paltry government action

Kobe's government announced January 20 that it would build 2,000 temporary homes to house the 300,000 displaced.

Japan's Korean minority was also disproportionately hit by the quake. Nagata Ward, an industrial center suffering some of the worst damage, is home to 10,000 Koreans. It is unlikely the shoe factories where many worked will ever reopen.

Earthquake experts appearing on television blasted authorities for allowing people to enter dangerous buildings, walk under leaning structures, and for not taking common risk-prevention measures such as tagging unsafe structures.

Thousands of people in Kobe spend all day in lines waiting for water and food. It will be months before many factories, including major steel and auto plants, resume full production. Just four of the port city's 239 ship berths survived the jolt. Now closed, Kobe's port was gateway to 12 percent of Japan's exports.

The government of Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama faces growing criticism for its inadequate response. Newspapers are publishing a growing number of claims that poor preparation, bureaucratic rivalry, and incompetence may have added to the death toll.

The governor of neighboring Osaka, Kazuo Nakagawa, accused the quake victims of being crybabies. They "should cook for themselves, but lack the will to do so. They should do whatever they can for themselves," he complained. "They think they can all be helped by others."

Don't spend foolishly to save lives

An editorial in the *Economist* January 21 titled "After Kobe" tells of the "bitter experience, and how to profit from it." The editors argue that the rules of the market should prevail over "common sense" in determining measures to prevent the devastation of future quakes because "individuals think their lives should be secure at any price."

But "behind any good policy to make the world safer," they hold, "there must be a hard calculation of the price that is being put on each life saved — which is why a painful job for governments after an event like Kobe is to fend off calls for foolish spending." The government has allocated a paltry \$1 billion.

"This is probably going to be one of the biggest rebuilding exercises" in Japan since the end of World War II, and a big opportunity for some businesses, gloated Davis Roche of Independent Strategy Ltd.

"When these people want to put their lives back together, they will have lost a substantial slice of their wealth," Roche continued. "They will buy the cheapest cooker, or fridge, or air conditioner available. Those are imports," he said, cherishing the opportunities for U.S. capitalists to expand in Japan's markets.

Interest rates rose in the money and bond markets following the crash, as profit-hungry speculators figured the government would have to borrow large new sums to rebuild. Construction-related stocks soared in anticipation of increased business.

Most analysts predict little damage to Japan's insurance industry, which is protected by the government. A legal ceiling of \$100,000 is set on the amount a homeowner can collect for quake damage. Only 3 percent of residents in the area held earthquake insurance policies.

Coverage for companies whose buildings are hit is limited to 15 percent of the value of the property. Many firms don't bother to buy it because premiums are so high.



Homeless people cram together at a school gymnasium in Kobe. Government plans to deal with the crisis have been inadequate.

'Effectively over,' Chechen war continues

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

After six weeks of pounding Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, Moscow has finally taken the presidential palace. Yet Russian troops are still locked in battle with Chechen fighters for control of the city. Several hundred Chechen fighters evacuated the presidential palace January 19 after a pair of massive Russian bombs slammed through the basement killing at least 30 Russian prisoners and 20 Chechen fighters.

The next day, Russian president Boris Yeltsin declared the conflict "effectively over," and fired a number of top military commanders who had opposed the war. The Chechen troops, who still control at least one-third of Grozny, dismissed pronouncements that the palace's capture was a major Russian victory. "There is nothing left — just rubble," a Chechen commander in Grozny told the *New York Times*. "Let them feast there amid the ruins."

If Moscow captures Grozny, said the Chechen military commander in Vendeno, "We are always prepared to fight in the mountains." Even if Moscow's forces overtake the city, more battles lie ahead

for control of other areas. "If the Russians come here, the same thing will happen to them as did in Grozny," said the commander of Chechen soldiers in a village south of the capital. "They will have to fight us house by house." Russian helicopters have begun launching rocket attacks on outlying towns from Grozny.

Peasants in several villages said they have mined some bridges and overpasses along the mountain roads to defend against Russian tanks. Fighting was also reported in the neighboring republic of Dagestan, where some Chechens also live.

Pointing out the problems Moscow faces in subduing the people of this region, Gen. Alexander Lebed, the commander of Russian forces in Moldova and a critic of the war, said, "It is not just Dudayev's forces, but the entire Chechen nation which is now fighting Russia." Dzhokar Dudayev, the president of Chechnya and a former Soviet general, declared independence for the republic of 1.2 million people in 1991.

Some anti-war protests continue in Russia. A sizable protest took place in Cheboksary January 22. People there mo-

bilized to support the governor, who has opposed sending locally stationed soldiers to fight in the war. The Paris daily *Le Monde* featured an interview with Sergei Kovalyov January 14. Yeltsin's "human rights" advisor and a leading critic of the war, Kovalyov called Yeltsin "a political corpse," and warned that the regime in Moscow is so weak it may turn to censorship and repression to staunch dissent.

Meanwhile, Yeltsin continues to get backing from U.S. ruling circles who see no alternative to his government for now.

Chiming in recently with those supporting the slaughter in Chechnya was U.S. Communist Party chairman Gus Hall. In an article in the January 14 *People's Weekly World*, Hall said, "capitulation to Chechen secessionists [would] signal a dismemberment of Russia. The unraveling of the Russian Federation would be a major victory for U.S. imperialism."

Other imperialist figures maintain their support for Yeltsin's bloody war. "Even if Yeltsin has made mistakes, I will not write him off now," declared German chancellor Helmut Kohl January 19. Germany's capitalist rulers are increasingly nervous about their investments. In 1994, German trade with Russia was \$15 billion, while Moscow's debt to Bonn is \$40 billion.

The consequences of the Chechen war continue to plague the Russian economy. Inflation is about 16 percent per month and international investment has dropped to one-twentieth of the top levels in the summer of 1994. The ruble fell to a record low of 3,969 against the dollar January 23.

"All the major money managers aren't going to put a cent into this market during the first quarter of '95," the president of a Russian investment research company told the *Wall Street Journal*.

Moscow is counting on a \$13 billion economic aid package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for its 1995 budget. An editorial in the *Financial Times* explained that if the IMF withholds it, their plans for using the Yeltsin regime to advance their interests in Russia could collapse.

CORRECTION

An inadvertent omission was made last week in *Militant* issue no. 4, in the article on page 3 entitled "Militant announces new editor, staff writers." Missing from the item was the news that former *Militant* editor George Fyson resumes the responsibilities of Managing Editor of the publication.

We apologize for any confusion; this may have caused our readers.

Clinton reaffirms assault on working class

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

U.S. president Bill Clinton's long-winded State of the Union address on January 24 offered few new proposals. The speech presented the administration's determination to work with the Republican Congressional majority and deepen the bipartisan assault on the rights and living standards of working people.

Keeping pace with the Republican initiative to cut off benefits to families on welfare after two years, Clinton declared the government should "help those on welfare for up to two years, but after that, there ought to be a simple, hard rule. Anyone who can work must go to work."

"Let this be the year we end welfare as we know it," he added.

Clinton vowed he would slash \$130 billion from the budget, which will eliminate or reduce a number of social programs that benefit the working class. Included in these cuts would be the reduction of federal housing programs from 60 to 3.

At the same time, the president proposed adding \$25 billion to the war budget in order to "make sure our military is ready for action."

Clinton pointed to the problem faced by Washington and the wealthy bondholders after the fall of the Mexican peso and continued political instability there. He insisted that Congress approve the \$40 bil-

lion package of loan guarantees that the White House prepared with leaders of both big-business parties, "not for the Mexican people but the sake of millions of Americans," especially businesses that export across the Rio Grande.

Clinton crowed about the reactionary bipartisan crime policy passed in 1994. He bragged that the "very tough crime bill" will mean "longer sentences, three strikes and you're out, and almost 60 new capital punishment offenses." Other reactionary measures include building more prisons and hiring 100,000 more cops.

Clinton renewed his place in the bipartisan chorus calling for a crackdown on the rights of immigrant workers. "We need to do more to better identify illegal aliens in the workplace," he said. He referred to former congresswoman Barbara Jordan who is trying to set up a national identification system for companies to investigate workers' immigration status.

The president stated that his administration has hired a "record number of new border guards" and deported "twice as many criminal aliens as ever." In addition, the White House has "aggressively moved to secure" the borders including "barring welfare benefits" to undocumented workers.

"America is once again the world's strongest economic power," Clinton

boasted. "Almost 6 million new jobs in the last two years, exports booming, and high-wage jobs are coming back," he continued. "A record number of American entrepreneurs are living the American dream."

But many working people are living the "American nightmare" according a report from the U.S. Census Bureau. An article on this report in the January 25 *Wall Street Journal* commented that Clinton's "many new jobs don't pay as well as former ones." A sample of 20,000 U.S. households found that workers who were laid off or left their jobs between 1990 and 1992 saw their income fall an average of 23 percent. A high percentage of these workers said their new jobs do not include health benefits.

"I believe you should raise the minimum wage," Clinton said in the speech. "You can't make a living on \$4.25 an hour." He made no proposals on how much to raise it or when. The *Wall Street Journal* pointed out that the president's weak nod toward raising the minimum wage was "carefully aimed at" appeasing the working class, who he "needs if he wants to remain in the White House past 1996." Clinton needs to project an image that "he is on the side of working people," said Tad Devine, a Democratic Party strategist.

Discussions boost NI sales

BY LAURA GARZA

Activists preparing for a series of major demonstrations against proposed education cutbacks in

| In the unions | | |
|--------------------------|------------|-----------|
| New International no. 10 | | |
| | goals | sold |
| ACTWU | 10 | |
| /ILGWU | | |
| IAM | 40 | 9 |
| OCAW | 30 | 11 |
| UAW | 50 | |
| UFCW | 5 | |
| UMWA | 10 | |
| USWA | 20 | 3 |
| UTU | 55 | 11 |
| Total | 220 | 34 |

ACTWU—Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union; IAM—International Association of Machinists; ILGWU—International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union; OCAW—Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers; UAW—United Auto Workers; UFCW—United Food and Commercial Workers; UMWA—United Mine Workers of America; USWA—United Steelworkers of America; UTU—United Transportation Union.

Canada invited Michel Dugré, a leader of the Communist League from Montreal, to speak at a planning meeting prior to the January 25 mobilization. Dugré spoke about major events in world politics, from the Russian invasion of Chechnya to the threats of the Canadian government against Quebec's right to self-determination.

After the discussion John Henry, a participant in the meeting from Victoria, British Columbia, bought the latest issue of the Marxist magazine *New International*. Articles in issue no. 10, examine the unfolding crisis of the world capitalist system. Henry was also interested in the article on how the Cuban revolution fits into this world picture.

Halfway through a 10-week campaign to sell 1,500 copies of *New International* no. 10, readers have sold 753 copies. Five participants at a march and rally January 22 in Boston to defend abortion rights purchased copies. Those who picked up *New International* in Boston were interested in finding out more about where right-

wing forces, like those that have attacked clinics, come from and how they can be defeated. Supporters of the magazine pointed out articles that explain the rightward shift of capitalist politics, and the relationship between this and the world economic crisis.

In San Francisco, after discussing *New International* no. 10 with coworkers, members of the United Transportation Union and the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers sold four copies of the magazine. In many cities supporters of the magazine have organized classes to discuss the articles and the lessons that can be applied to unfolding events like the deepening crisis in Mexico.

The 10-week campaign slated to end February 28 includes an effort to win many who recently began reading the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* to renew their subscriptions. Special attention to calling subscribers and discussing the coverage of world events—from articles on Cuba and South Africa, to the fight against capitalist austerity plans—will help boost renewals.

Curtis files legal challenge to prison victimization

BY JOHN STUDER

William Kutmus and Jeanne Johnson, lawyers for imprisoned political activist Mark Curtis, filed a legal brief January 20 challenging his recent victimization on trumped-up charges of assaulting another inmate.

Guards at the Iowa State Penitentiary seized Curtis Aug. 23, 1994, while he worked in the prison hospital. The hospital is located in the maximum security facility. Curtis was on a gate pass from the medium security John Bennett Correctional Center, where he had been incarcerated.

Gate-pass jobs are won by inmates who have a record of good behavior, and are viewed as a step on the way to release on parole. The union and political activist had just won the gate-pass job after a two-year fight.

Curtis was imprisoned in 1988 on frame-up charges of rape and burglary. He was arrested while participating in a public campaign to defend 17 coworkers from Mexico and El Salvador, who had been seized in a federal immigration raid on the Monfort Meat-packing company in Des Moines, Iowa, where they worked.

Court rejects Curtis's appeal

On January 18, a three-judge panel from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit located in St. Louis rejected political activist Mark Curtis's appeal of his 1988 frame-up conviction on charges of rape and burglary.

"No error of law appears," the judge's terse two-page ruling states, "and an opinion would lack precedential value. Accordingly, the order of the District Court is affirmed without further discussion."

Curtis has 14 days to appeal the ruling further.

Hours before his arrest, Curtis had spoken out in Spanish at a public meeting urging further actions to win their freedom. After a travesty of a trial, Curtis was convicted and has served more than six years behind bars. He is appealing his conviction in federal court.

Curtis was working with supporters in the Mark Curtis Defense Committee to launch an international campaign to press for his release on parole when he was grabbed, shackled by prison guards, and charged with assaulting another inmate. Referring to his defense committee, a guard told him that he would see what his "friends in Des Moines" could do about it.

Curtis was thrown into segregation and held for 20 days. He was finally taken before Charles Harper, the prison administrative law judge assigned to the case, on September 12. Over his objection, Curtis was shackled hand and foot during the proceeding and denied the right to be represented by a lawyer. He was denied the right to cross examine the evidence against him, which consisted solely of allegations from the guard who arrested him and a secret statement from a "confidential informant" that Curtis was not allowed to see.

'Not the best' evidence

Even though Harper admitted in his written ruling that the evidence against Curtis was "not the best," he found him guilty and sentenced him to the maximum punishment allowed under prison regulations—30 days in "the hole" (in total isolation) and a year in disciplinary lockup.

Curtis appealed this victimization to the prison warden and then to the state Department of Corrections, which upheld the kangaroo court decision.

His lawsuit, in the form of an application for postconviction relief, challenges both the conviction and the harshness of the sentence. It was filed in the Iowa Dis-

trict Court for Lee County, in Fort Madison, Iowa, where the prison is located.

Prison disciplinary hearings are not conducted under the same rules of evidence and proof as in court. Iowa law allows prison judges to convict inmates even though there is not evidence to find guilt "beyond the shadow of a doubt." Instead, prison authorities only need to present "some evidence."

Even under this standard, Curtis's lawsuit states, there was no evidence Curtis assaulted anyone. "The record in his disciplinary hearing does not support the 'some evidence' standard to conclude that Plaintiff committed an assault on another inmate," the complaint says. The lawsuit also argues that Curtis is entitled to relief because of a number of violations of his rights:

First, the suit explains, Curtis "was denied a timely hearing under prison regulations." Prison rules state that anyone placed in summary segregation must be granted a hearing within four days. Curtis was forced to wait 10.

In addition, the entire investigation of the alleged attack leading up to Curtis's hearing was conducted under the claim that Curtis had confessed to hitting someone. The original charges filed against Curtis state that the guard assigned to Curtis "advised us that Curtis had stated to him that he had struck another inmate."

"The entire investigation was conducted under color of this belief," Curtis's lawsuit says, while "in fact, there was no such evidence, and the statement produced from C/O Damico at the investigative hearing indicated the opposite—that Plaintiff denied assaulting anyone."

Guard gives main evidence

The main piece of evidence presented against Curtis was a statement by prison Internal Affairs guard Louis Galloway, who claimed he interviewed a nurse who told him she saw Curtis hit an

inmate. However, Curtis's suit explains, this charge is "not signed by Nurse Barnett, and consists of leading questions posed to Nurse Barnett by C/O Galloway, not the least of which is Galloway's statement to Barnett identifying Curtis as the alleged assailant."

The suit notes that Curtis "was denied a meaningful opportunity to participate in his disciplinary hearing by being able to take notes and handle evidence, for the reason that his hands were cuffed behind his back."

In addition, the hearing judge hadn't undertaken "any inquiry into the reliability and credibility of the Confidential Informant"—the only other evidence against Curtis—"whose statement was used by [Administrative Law Judge] Harper to support Harper's conclusion that Plaintiff had committed an assault."

In addition to these violations of Curtis's elementary rights, the suit points out a number of other prison regulations and standards that were not adhered to in the investigation and trial.

Finally, the suit argues that "the sanctions imposed in this case are excessively harsh." Curtis's

lawyers note that prison guards reported that there were no signs of physical injury to the inmate he allegedly hit and that the judge ruled that Curtis was not guilty of three additional charges the authorities filed against him.

In addition, the suit notes "Plaintiff's total lack of a past violent behavior pattern, the lack of seriousness of the offense, Plaintiff's ability to handle obligations of his current assignment and privileges within the facility, and Plaintiff's lack of violations of the same or similar rules."

"For all of the above-stated reasons," the suit concludes, "Plaintiff demands that his application for postconviction relief be granted, that the findings and conclusions of [Administrative Law Judge] Harper be reversed, that all sanctions be expunged from his record, that all credit for good time credit be restored, and that Plaintiff be released from maximum security."

For copies of the lawsuit, or further information on the fight to win Curtis's release, contact the Mark Curtis Defense Committee, Box 1048, Des Moines, Iowa 50311.

**Sold to date: 51%
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| Miami | 35 | 24 | 69% | 13 | 2 | 6 | 0 |
| Houston | 25 | 17 | 68% | 8 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Des Moines | 30 | 20 | 67% | 9 | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| Twin Cities | 50 | 33 | 66% | 14 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Seattle | 40 | 26 | 65% | 9 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Boston | 45 | 29 | 64% | 12 | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| Los Angeles | 100 | 64 | 64% | 20 | 0 | 10 | 0 |
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| Newark | 100 | 33 | 33% | 12 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Chicago | 50 | 0 | 0% | 15 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| Cleveland | 17 | 3 | 0% | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other | — | 6 | | | | | |
| Total U.S. | 1152 | 586 | 51% | 246 | 24 | 68 | 1 |
| Australia | 16 | 6 | 38% | 9 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Britain | | | | | | | |
| Manchester | 40 | 19 | 48% | — | 0 | — | 0 |
| London | 55 | 30 | 55% | — | 0 | — | 0 |
| Total | 95 | 49 | 52% | — | 0 | — | 0 |
| Canada | | | | | | | |
| Vancouver | 35 | 18 | 51% | — | 0 | — | 0 |
| Toronto | 55 | 27 | 49% | — | 3 | — | 0 |
| Montreal | 45 | 20 | 44% | — | 0 | — | 0 |
| Total | 135 | 65 | 48% | — | 3 | — | 0 |
| France | 20 | 0 | 0% | — | — | — | — |
| Iceland | 4 | 1 | 25% | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| New Zealand | | | | | | | |
| Christchurch | 15 | 12 | 80% | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Auckland | 30 | 20 | 67% | 10 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Wellington | 3 | 1 | 33% | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 48 | 33 | 69% | 20 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Puerto Rico | 2 | 1 | 50% | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Sweden | 15 | 12 | 80% | 7 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Total | 1487 | 752 | 51% | 287 | 35 | 74 | 4 |
| SHOULD BE | 1500 | 750 | 50% | 320 | 160 | 80 | 40 |

Rallies defend right to choose abortion

Continued from front page

campus to work for abortion rights drove down for the action.

Many of the participants in the march and rally, which was initiated by the National Organization for Women (NOW) in Massachusetts, came from Boston-area campuses and high schools. They carried banners from Brandeis University's Voice for Choice group, the Harvard School of Public Health, and Students for Choice from Tufts University. Students also came from Boston University, Newton High School, and other schools. "Abortion is a woman's right" and "No to Clinic Violence," were popular signs. Others read, "The Hyde Amendment is toxic to women," and "Protect choice and those who provide it." The Hyde Amendment cut off federal funding for abortions, depriving poor women the right to choose whether or not to terminate a pregnancy.

A group of students from Boston College also came out. The Jesuit-run school has banned students from setting up a pro-choice group, but one student at the march said abortion is a hot topic of discussion, with many students holding a firm pro-choice position. A memorial service for Shannon Lowney, who was a graduate of Boston College, was held there January 23. Some 150 students attended. Operation Rescue called on people to protest the university's decision to allow the memorial to take place.

"I came to the demonstration because I saw it in the newspaper. I've never been to a protest before," said Collin Durrant, a student at Tufts, outside Boston. "I wanted to show them [abortion opponents] that the mode of terrorism they use is unacceptable."

"I believe in this and I wanted to get the experience of being in a march," said Elissa Fox, 17, a high school student at the Cambridge School of Weston. Fox was at her first demonstration. She said about 10-15 students from her school also joined the march.

"Mobilizations like this are important and we have to stay in the streets," said Jonathan McDowell, a longtime clinic defender and an escort at the Preterm Clinic, where one of the attacks occurred December 30.

Assigning blame to both sides

In the weeks after the killings local politicians and others launched a campaign to assign both supporters and opponents of abortion rights some blame for the rising tension in front of the clinics.

Massachusetts governor William Weld organized a meeting with representatives of the abortion clinics and some pro-choice groups to urge a moratorium on all protests and a call for "dialogue" between both sides in the debate.

Earlier, Bernard Cardinal Law, an outspoken proponent of antiabortion protests in front of clinics, called for a moratorium in light of the killings. Law's announcement reflected growing divisions among the right wing about the effectiveness of continuing these actions. Support for antiabortion protests in front of the clinics has dwindled as they are being more and more identified with terrorist acts carried out against those seeking abortions, clinic workers, and doctors.

The *Boston Globe* ran an editorial urging "a general agreement to cease demonstrations, pro and con, that might erupt in violence.... More talk and less fist-waving can expand tunnel vision to focus on individuals with complex lives who can come together, at least to agree to disagree, as they grapple with the intricacies of law and conscience."

While the big-business media gave ample coverage to antiabortion actions being planned for the weekend of January 22, no mention of the march to defend abortion rights was made until the day before the demonstration.

"I want people to know we had a great deal of difficulty finding space [to hold the rally]. Some places said they were afraid, they raised their prices and closed their doors," explained Ellen Convisser, president of Massachusetts State NOW. The Arlington Street Church was finally secured for the event. The demonstrators packed this Unitarian church with the crowd flowing into the aisles and sitting on the floors. Many had to stand outside in the rain to hear the speeches.

Particia Ireland, NOW president, was the featured speaker. She pointed to the Violence Against Women Act, the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances bill, and the ban on assault weapons as major victories for women. She also said women had made gains after the 1992 elections because "we had Ginsburg on the bench [Supreme Court], and the Justice Department on our side." She acknowledged, however, that Janet Reno's Justice Department was not providing adequate protection for clinics.

Ireland urged people to participate in a rally called by NOW for April 9 in Washington, D.C., to oppose violence against women. A press release states the rally's



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

Thousands of abortion rights supporters at the Boston march displayed banners backing a woman's right to choose and condemning murders of clinic workers.

purpose is "to show the nation, the 104th Congress and President Clinton that those who oppose violence against women — including anti-abortion terrorism and the tyrannical measures of the Republican 'Contract on America' — are the overwhelming majority."

Other speakers during the day included Edith Vries, a member of the African National Congress; Domenic Bozzotto, president of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union Local 26; and Antoinette Riley from Harbor Me Women's Shelter. The family of Shannon Lowney sent a message that read in part, "At this time of tremendous personal loss, we continue to support efforts to protect women's right to choose."

Actions across the country

Events were held to commemorate the 22nd anniversary of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion and to defend abortion rights in dozens of cities across the country, from Charlotte, North Carolina, to Phoenix, Arizona.

In Philadelphia, 800 participated in a rally January 21. A small car caravan from there also traveled up to the Boston demonstration.

More than 150 turned out for a rally at the University of Pittsburgh January 22. Dr. Robert Kisner said he would continue to provide abortion services despite the harassment of his family and their home by antiabortion forces.

About 300 gathered January 22 in New York City to protest the recent killings. A convocation in support of abortion rights held at St. John the Divine Episcopal Cathedral the same day drew 700 people.

In Washington, D.C., activists organized clinic defense that weekend to prepare for a mobilization by opponents of abortion rights. In the past the rightists have organized major efforts to blockade clinics in conjunction with their yearly national rally to condemn the Roe v. Wade decision, but nothing similar occurred this year. Three hundred and fifty clinic defenders came out January 21 and another 150 showed up the following Monday to be dispatched to facilities in Washington, D.C., and suburban Maryland and Virginia. But right-wing forces mustered only about a dozen at a clinic in the Capitol.

Many of the speakers at the right-wing rally held January 23, which park police estimated at 45,000, felt compelled to distance themselves from the recent killings and the threats frequently issued in front of clinics. According to the *Washington Post*, the march had a heavily patriotic tone, with *God Bless America* being sung as the procession stepped off.

Some spokespersons for antiabortion groups expressed hope that with the recent election of more Republicans they would be able to pass further restrictions on abortion.

Buchanan taking antiabortion lead

But prominent conservative figures like Newt Gingrich, who opposes abortion rights, have been quiet on the issue, a recognition of the fact that majority sentiment remains on the side of keeping abortion safe and legal.

One figure who has chosen to loudly proclaim his opposition to legalized abortion is Patrick Buchanan, the right-wing columnist who competed for the Republi-

can nomination for president in 1992 and who is currently putting in place the forces for another try. Buchanan addressed a gathering of antiabortion activists in Washington, D.C., the day before the January 23 rally.

He also spoke at an antiabortion rally of about 250 in Concord, New Hampshire, on January 21. "This movement is going to rise again...and go all the way to victory," he declared. Buchanan noted his agreement with the stance taken by New York's John Cardinal O'Connor who rejected joining the call to halt protests in front of clinics. "There is a special place in hell for those who in times of great moral crisis remain silent. We will not remain silent," declared Buchanan.

During his talk Buchanan referred to revolutions that occurred in 1979 in Nicaragua, Iran, and Grenada. He also mentioned losing the war in Vietnam, and events in Ethiopia and Angola, where attempts by imperialist countries to overthrow governments and impose regimes more subservient to Washington were pushed back. He said those years were the "dog days" of his life. But, he stated, "the Soviet empire peacefully collapsed before our eyes, and one day the abortion movement will do the same."

Other rightist forces have continued to call for actions in front of the clinics, and some have defended the recent spate of murders as "justifiable homicide." Through their provocative statements these groups are probing to see if they will be allowed to continue to operate with the relative impunity they have enjoyed. One group, the American Coalition of Life Activists, released a list with the names of doctors who perform abortions calling it a list of the "Deadly Dozen Abortionists."

Meanwhile, the Justice Department continues to respond at a snail's pace to requests for protection. Reno's office was sent a list of 21 clinics that recently received death threats and urgently requested assistance. The list was compiled and submitted by the Feminist Majority Foundation, led by Eleanor Smeal. A week later, no response had been given.

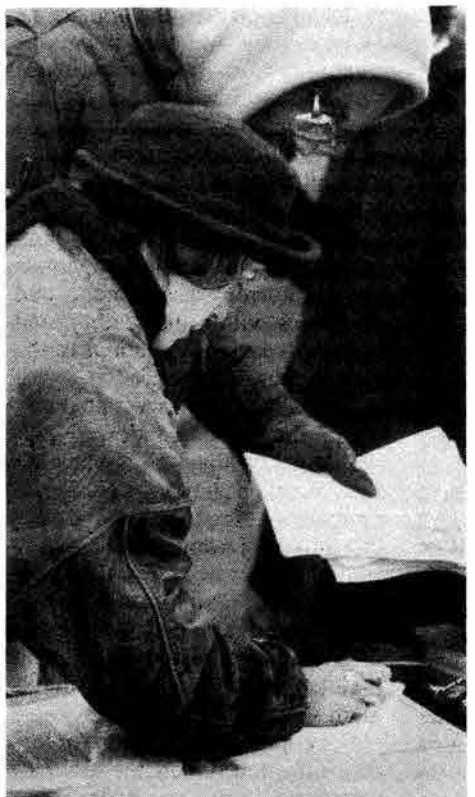
The director of clinic defense for the Planned Parenthood Foundation of America said she could not get a clear definition from the Justice Department of what criteria would qualify a clinic as eligible for federal protection.

Last November, the Justice Department reduced to 10 the number of clinics receiving federal protection. Justice Department spokesman Carl Stern said after the recent shootings in Brookline, Massachusetts, that only two more clinics have received protection.

A spokeswoman for the Hillcrest clinic in Norfolk, Virginia, which was shot up the day after the murders in Brookline, said they asked for protection by federal marshals, but all they got was a courtesy call from a local marshal who gave them a standard packet advising them of precautionary measures to take in an emergency. Stern said the government had determined it was unnecessary to provide further protection because officials held the clinic was in no imminent danger.

Contributing to this article were Ethel Lobman in New York; Brad Downs in Washington, D.C.; Doug Hord in Boston; Helen Meyers in Philadelphia; and Peggy Kriener in Pittsburgh.

Supporters of imprisoned unionist reach out at abortion rights march



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

Abortion rights supporter signing up for information about Mark Curtis.

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

BOSTON — Supporters of the Mark Curtis Defense Committee participated in the January 22 march and rally to stop clinic violence and defend abortion rights here. The committee has launched a campaign to gain new endorsers for the fight to win freedom for imprisoned political and union activist Mark Curtis.

"This case shows the government's opposition to anyone with socialist endeavors who stands up and fights," said Steven Monks, a student at Western Maryland University. Monks is a 21-year-old activist who learned about the case for the first time the night before the march and subsequently became an endorser of the defense effort.

"We've got to find solidarity. Curtis is an example," Monks added. "I found the evidence against him dubious. If we don't stand up and say this is wrong it will continue."

Monks, who also went to the November 12 march in solidarity with the Cuban revolution in Washington, D.C., said he wants to organize a public meeting on his campus for Curtis.

Several hundred informational flyers were given to participants at the abortion rights march, many learning about the case for the first time.

Rural toilers win back land in S. Africa

Return of Doornkop is first major victory since passage of land rights act

BY GREG ROSENBERG

DOORKOP, South Africa — On June 26, 1974, hundreds of trucks from the Department of Bantu Administration, backed up by a heavily-armed contingent of the South African Police, invaded this 2,128 acre stretch of green land in the Eastern Transvaal province and expelled its 20,000 residents to a barren apartheid "homeland."

On Dec. 1, 1994, 66 families began re-occupying their land in the first such case since South African president Nelson Mandela signed the Land Rights Restitution Act in November.

"I was here when they came to remove us," said 78-year-old Magdalene Sehlola. "They didn't ask us, they didn't talk to us. They just came and destroyed us."

Sehlola and some 300 others are the first of the descendants of 284 original Black land owners to return to Doornkop. They look forward to productive use of the land to help feed the country, and building anew what was destroyed when the South African army and police turned the area into a training ground and cop recreation center. "We are going to plant peaches, mealies [maize], and other vegetables. I'm so pleased, I don't even feel hungry, though I have no food," she said.

Black freehold since 1920

The original residents of Doornkop were a Pedi-speaking people from Sekukhuneland in the Northern Transvaal. They moved to nearby Botshabelo in the 19th century after conflicts with a local chief. Fearful of losing their land after the Boer War, the group decided to purchase their own land. All able-bodied men went to work in the diamond mines of Kimberley in order to accumulate savings.

The community began making payments on Doornkop in 1899. The title deed was transferred to 284 people representing each family in 1920.

Doornkop was run collectively, with grazing lands, large fruit orchards, and vegetable gardens. The farmers grew peaches, plums, grapes, apples, pears, and



Madileng Ramaube, chair of Doornkop residents committee, with copy of 1920 title deed showing ownership of farm, which was later declared a "black spot" and expropriated by apartheid regime. After a 20-year fight, families have won back the land.

more. Produce was trucked for sale to nearby Middleburg. The community raised funds for and built two schools and several churches. Each family was allocated a large plot, perhaps the size of a present-day football field. There were houses and huts; ranches for cattle, sheep, and goats; pigsties, and chicken runs. A mobile clinic served the settlement.

With the passage of the Group Areas Act in the 1950s, the apartheid regime intensified its efforts to drive Blacks from the land. Many farm labor tenants expelled from neighboring white-owned farms moved to Doornkop, and were allowed to reside there as tenants.

Apartheid's land policies were designed to drive masses of Africans into the mines and factories. The head of the Chamber of Mines wrote in 1912 that "outside special reserves, the ownership of the land must be in the hands of the white race...the surplus of young [African] men, instead of squatting on the land in idleness and spreading out over unlimited areas, must earn their living by working for a wage."

Beginning with the passage of the 1913 Natives' Land Act, known among Blacks as the "law of dispossession," and subsequent legislation, some 87 percent of land throughout South Africa was reserved for whites. Between 1960 and 1990 alone,

some 3.5 million Blacks were expelled from their land, and millions were exiled to apartheid's phony "homelands" — the Bantustans.

Government expropriates land

For decades after the passage of the Land Act, numerous Black freehold areas continued to exist. The white regime referred to these areas as "black spots" and targeted them for abolition. The authorities declared Doornkop a "black spot" in 1964 and said people would have to leave. The community refused.

Commenting on their relations with whites in the area, one person expelled from the farm told a 1992 meeting, "It is our firm belief that they [the whites] had nothing to do with our removal. The removal was from Pretoria and had nothing to do with the whites in Middleburg. The white farmers around us were like part of us. We lived like brothers and sisters."

In 1969 the Pretoria regime officially expropriated the Doornkop land.

After numerous threats and harassment of the community, the expulsion proceeded in 1974. Bulldozers began demolishing houses, but people still refused to leave. Police had to search for the residents and round them up onto the trucks.

Most of Doornkop's residents were exiled to the Lebowa "homeland," which they had never seen before. What did they do there? "We were unemployed and paying rent," said 69-year-old Madileng Ramaube, a member of the African National Congress who chairs the local residents committee. Before the expulsion, he said, "I had cattle and crops. I had nine cows, and more than a hundred [fruit] trees. Each family here had an orchard." He lost everything.

The government razed everything to the ground. Today there is no sign of the orchards that were once bursting with fruit. Only the bullet-scarred remnants of the school are left standing. It was used for target practice.

The Doornkop families waged a nearly

Continued on Page 7

F E B R U A R Y

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Jack Barnes

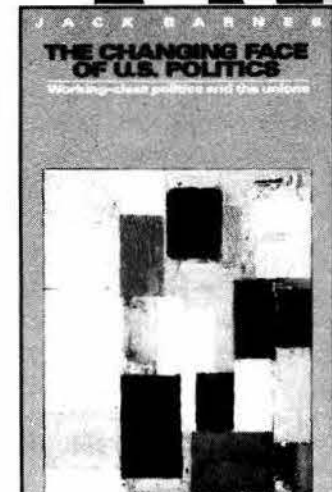
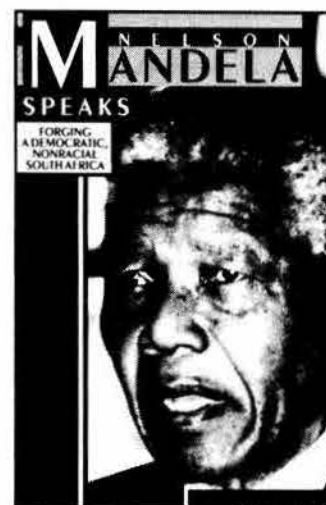
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International youth brigade visits Cuba

BY DAMON TINNON

CIEGO DE AVILA, Cuba — Upon our arrival at a banana farm here, the 70 youth who formed the International Youth Brigade to Cuba began getting a firsthand look at the everyday life of Cuban workers, farmers, and youth. The brigade was comprised of young workers and students from the United States, Canada, Britain, Sweden, Mexico, Iceland, Spain, and Germany. On editorial assignments for newspapers, radio stations, and magazines from around the world, the youth joined the brigade to learn about Cuba and write and speak about their experiences upon their return.

The brigade spent its first week with the Eduardo Delgado Garcia agricultural contingent on the banana farm. This is a volunteer contingent of Cuban youth, organized by the Union of Young Communists (UJC), who are working to increase agricultural production in Cuba. Each of the 200 young people at the camp volunteers to do agricultural work for one year, then return to their job or studies. Youth at the camp had a range of different experiences, from military service in Angola as part of the fight against the South African army, to participating in the literacy campaign during the Nicaraguan revolution.

The brigade was received by the entire camp in a welcoming ceremony the first day there. "It is an honor to have you here. You are the first foreign group to be received in this camp," explained Juan Martinez, a leader of the UJC in the province. Reporters were present and the story of the brigade's arrival made nationally televised news. "This delegation is the largest of U.S. citizens received in Cuba in this type of agricultural camp," an article in the daily newspaper *Granma* explained.

The following day we visited the fields during production hours to talk to workers and learn how banana trees were maintained, and when ripe, how they were harvested. "I couldn't believe the energy level of the workers. They voluntarily work for 15 days straight with only 3 days off afterward," commented Lorena Gaibor from New Jersey. "But no one seemed to complain. Their spirit alone made this part of the trip the best part for me." Brigade members joined Cuban workers for four days of volunteer work in the fields.

In response to the interest in political discussion on the part of both the Cubans and the *brigadistas*, several classes were jointly organized after lunch and dinner to facilitate an exchange of views and experiences. Classes were given on the ideas of Che Guevara and on the fight against

Proposition 187, the anti-immigrant measure recently passed in California. Many of the Cubans had questions on the outcome of this fight.

Cuban volunteer Jorge Fajardo prepared a class on the "special period." This is the phrase Cubans use to describe the particular measures taken in the midst of the current economic crisis, which was compounded by the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba's largest trading partner. Questions were raised following this presentation on the rise of social ills in Cuban society such as prostitution, children begging, and the black market. "We do not deny that these things exist in Cuba but these are not the actions of the majority," Fajardo answered. "The majority are with the government and with the people and are trying to survive the special period."

On the final evening, brigade members presented a donation to the camp and to schools in the province. Preceding the brigade, participants had organized to collect work boots to donate. These boots were collected from trade unionists and others around the world involved in struggles of their own, in a gesture of solidarity to the fighting workers of Cuba. Not having enough boots for agricultural workers has been a serious problem. "Next to your presence here, this is the best gift you could have given us," one worker at the camp commented.

The brigade then spent three days visit-



Militant/Damon Tinnon

Participants in international youth brigade and Cuban volunteers at a class at banana farm. Youth from around the world and Cuba discussed wide array of subjects.

ing different areas learning about the tourist industry in Cuba. Workers at Cayo Coco, an immense resort built as a joint venture between the Cuban government and Spanish capitalists, gave us a tour. They pointed out that the global economic isolation engendered by the embargo and loss of trade with the Soviet Union required Cuba to seek short-term methods of obtaining hard currency. Tourism provides such an avenue. "We have to get hard currency in order to survive and at the same time maintain our revolutionary spirits," said one worker.

There were many discussions on the so-

cial status of Cuban women today and one of the more popular meetings was in Havana with leaders of the Federation of Cuban Women. They explained that women in Cuba had made many advances such as the right to abortion and access to day-care centers so women can be part of the workforce and become more self-reliant. Brigade members also met with university students and people who work with HIV positive patients. They also visited the Museum of the Revolution; the Palace of the Pioneers, where activities for children are organized; and a biotechnology center.

S. African cabinet rejects indemnity granted to 3,500 police in apartheid's final hours

BY GREG ROSENBERG

The South African cabinet on January 18 revoked a blanket indemnity from prosecution granted by the apartheid regime to 3,500 police and several top government officials just days before the country's first democratic, nonracial elections last April.

The recent exposure of the clandestine amnesty plan set off a sharp debate within the Government of National Unity and a political crisis for the National Party. The party's leader, F.W. deKlerk, was president of South Africa at the time the indemnity applications were filed.

Those applying included former law and order minister Adriaan Vlok, current police chief Gen. Johan van der Merwe, and former defense minister Gen. Magnus Malan. Van der Merwe claimed he had only applied to "identify" with his men,

and that applicants had acted "under the instructions of the government of the day against a revolutionary onslaught."

In a January 19 statement, Minister of Justice Dullah Omar of the African National Congress said he began investigating the situation after van der Merwe told the Johannesburg *Star* newspaper the police refused to pursue allegations of Vlok's involvement in the 1988 bombing of Khotso House because he had been granted amnesty. The downtown Johannesburg building housed the South African Council of Churches and other organizations. Vlok reportedly gave personal congratulations to the cops involved in the operation.

"The only way amnesty will be obtained, will be through individual application, through the mechanism provided by law on the basis of individual full disclo-

sure of the acts for which the indemnity is sought," Omar told Parliament in a snap debate January 23. This goes for ANC members who were involved in guerrilla actions against the apartheid regime, as well as cops and army operatives.

The 3,500 applications were filed *en masse* from April 25-29. The elections ended April 29. No police disclosed what they proposed being indemnified for. Instead, a typed insert made reference to "all activities."

The apartheid military and police murdered untold thousands in their effort to smash the ANC-led democratic revolution. Tens of thousands were jailed and tortured, and an undisclosed number assassinated by Pretoria's hit squads inside and outside the country.

A bill the ANC has placed before Parliament would establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The body will oversee documentation of human rights abuses, consider claims for reparation, and grant amnesty to offenders who confess to specific acts. The bill stipulates that the commission will "publish the full names of any person to whom amnesty has been granted, together with sufficient information to identify the act."

Trouble for National Party

With the exposure of the amnesty deal, a frenzied deKlerk threatened that he might pull out of the Government of National Unity. He claimed that during the January 18 cabinet meeting that revoked the secret amnesty, ANC ministers had "viciously insulted" him and his party over the amnesty and its obstructive attitude toward the government's Reconstruction and Development Program.

"The attack was unfair, unjustified and totally unacceptable. It was so serious that I felt myself obliged to inform the cabinet that I would have to reconsider my position," deKlerk stated.

These threats came during the National Party's national conference, where a number of central party leaders called for extending the coalition government arrangement well beyond its projected five-year lifespan, due to expire in 1999.

DeKlerk quickly withdrew his threat after a meeting with President Nelson Mandela, held to resolve "the serious situation which has developed within the government of national unity." Each said they would maintain their counterposed positions on the indemnity issue.

Return of Doornkop is first major land victory

Continued from Page 6

two-decade fight to get their land back. They intensified their efforts in 1987 and enlisted the assistance of the Transvaal Rural Action Committee (TRAC), which works on land reform and restitution. "From then we strengthened our struggle," said 60-year-old Rebone Ramaube. "In 1993 we marched to the minister's office in Pretoria and he ran away," she laughed. "There were many people from Lebowa, Bophuthatswana, and Mamelodi [a township outside Pretoria]," in the demonstration.

Lawyers working with TRAC filed another claim and new pressures were brought to bear on the National Party government in 1992. The next year the Land Affairs ministry agreed in principle that Doornkop would be returned. It wasn't until after the country's first democratic, nonracial elections, when the African National Congress became the majority party in the national assembly, that a date was set for restitution.

The Restitution of Land Rights Act, signed into law one month before Doornkop residents began returning, entitles Blacks whose land was stolen under apartheid to file a claim to get it back. Those driven from their land since 1913 have three years to petition a land claims commission and court.

Elias Khama, a TRAC fieldworker who

has worked with the Doornkop community, pointed out that this restitution fight is well-documented. The land was bought outright. Residents have secured copies of the original title deed. Moreover, the previous government had not resold the land to a third party. Other restitution battles are likely to be more complicated.

New challenges

The Middleburg city council, a holdover from apartheid, refuses to provide any basic services at Doornkop, including water and electricity. The Department of Land Affairs has contracted to provide water trucks and sanitation. People have built tin shacks as temporary shelter.

The area is littered with empty bullet casings, tear gas canisters, and grenade components from its days as a military training ground. At least one unexploded device has been uncovered. Police have refused to clean up the area.

"The police should have already started cleaning up!" said Madileng Ramaube. "We want it to be like it was when we left. This place is not theirs, it's ours. They haven't even agreed with us that it's our place. But they will have to go from here."

The police maintain a recreation center at Doornkop. Despite promises to move, they haven't yet. Brand new razor wire has just been laid around the facility. Po-

lice don't share their running water and electrical facilities with people in the new village.

As a land restitution case, Doornkop falls under the 22 presidential projects of the government's Reconstruction and Development Program. The local committee is preparing its plans and funding needs to give to the government to rebuild the area.

"We need seed, fertilizer, equipment, credit," building materials, a school, and more, said Ramaube. "We need everything so we can plow. Not only for ourselves, but for the people of South Africa." He thinks that with "the present legislature, it will be very positive."

Word has gone out across the country that the Doornkop land has been returned. It may be a months-long process to reach all the descendants of the original land owners, who have scattered to townships as far away as Soweto. When a sufficient number arrive, Ramaube said, decisions on how to divide and develop the land will be made collectively. "We're going to give everyone a portion. Everyone will decide what to do, to plow or what."

"We feel that we're very late. By this time we should have plowed mealies and other crops. In the winter time we're going to plow."

Despite the challenges, Ramaube emphasized, "I am very, very happy that we have won our land back."

Workers in Cuba increase their management role through factory assemblies

(Second of three articles)

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS
AND MARY-ALICE WATERS

HAVANA, Cuba — "We are now more confident we can improve working conditions and increase production." This is how Vilma Iturralde summed up the discussion at the end of a workers assembly at the Heroes of Moncada cigar factory on November 30. Iturralde, a cigar maker, is the secretary of the tobacco workers union at the plant, located in Marianao, a working-class suburb of Havana.

The meeting drew a balance sheet on what workers in the plant had accomplished since their first *parlamento obrero* (workers parliament) at the beginning of 1994.

In January and February of last year, a team of *Militant* reporters participated in a number of these assemblies, including the one at Heroes of Moncada, and interviewed workers who talked to us about several other meetings. The workers assemblies began in January 1994 at the initiative of the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC), following a December 1993 meeting of the National Assembly, Cuba's parliament. During that session of the Assembly, deputies discussed but deferred decisions on a series of proposed financial measures aimed at reviving industrial and agricultural production. (See three articles that appeared in April 4, 11, and 18 issues of the *Militant* last year.)

Confronting the economic crisis

Cuban working people have been confronting a severe economic crisis ever since Cuba suddenly lost aid and trade at preferential prices with the former Soviet bloc countries beginning in 1989. In the last six months of 1993, the government took a number of major steps to alleviate the crisis, including decriminalizing the possession and use of U.S. dollars, licensing self-employment in some 140 occupations, and beginning to reorganize most of the country's state farms into cooperative units.

The December 1993 National Assembly session considered additional measures, including raising prices on some basic necessities sold at subsidized rates; charging for sporting and cultural events, which were free; raising or instituting fees on electricity and other services; and implementing an income tax.

All of these steps were aimed at bringing down the rapidly rising rate of inflation that was seriously eroding the purchasing power of the Cuban peso and imposing what was in effect a steeply regressive tax burden on working people. The inflation was largely a result of the fact that few workers had been laid off or cut off from unemployment benefits, despite many closed plants and declining production everywhere due to shortages of raw materials and spare parts. Cuba's revolutionary government was attempting to cushion the impact of the economic crisis on workers and farmers.

With growing quantities of pesos in circulation and little to buy, prices skyrocketed. Some basic necessities are available to all Cubans at subsidized prices through their ration books, but the inflation, which was registered first and foremost in black market prices, inevitably hit hardest at those with the least income.

Since the measures under debate by the National Assembly would have an impact on the cost of living of Cuban workers, the deputies decided to first organize discussion of the country's economic crisis in every factory and solicit opinions from the workers on the measures being considered.

Some 80,000 meetings, involving more than 3 million workers, took place between January and April 1994. Peasant parliaments were also organized in cooperative farms as well as meetings at universities and other schools.

The National Assembly met again in May to consider the results of the workers parliaments. It adopted a number of measures that had been broadly — though not unanimously — supported by workers in the factory assemblies, including stiffer sentences for theft and other economic crimes, sharply higher prices for cigarettes and rum, increased rates for electricity and other utilities, and fees for school lunches as well as entrance to museums, concerts, and athletic events.

Other measures, such as a tax on wages, which had met with stiff resistance in factory assemblies, were postponed for further debate.

Meanwhile, the CTC initiated another round of workers meetings in the factories and in the countryside, called economic efficiency assemblies, so that workers could continue to discuss and make decisions on concrete measures affecting pro-

ductivity in the plants.

The November 30 meeting at Heroes of Moncada was part of a second round of economic efficiency assemblies organized between October 15 and November 30.

"Through the economic efficiency assemblies the workers and their unions are once again becoming the chief protagonists in the global transformations that the Cuban economy and society are undergoing," said Pedro Ross Leal, general secretary of the CTC, in a speech on December 17. Ross, who is also a member of Cuba's Council of State, was addressing an expanded meeting of the national leadership of the CTC.

In several of the factories a team of *Militant* reporters visited in November and December, and in interviews with other workers, we were able to see the impact of these assemblies on workers' consciousness and morale. In three plants we visited for a second or third time in less than a year, most workers we spoke to said that through the issues confronted in the course of three rounds of assemblies they have been able to raise productivity, cut waste, improve control over plant security, and increase their self-confidence in the process.

They saw their collective leadership efforts as the real solution to Cuba's economic crisis, knowing that greater productivity means not increased profits for a capitalist owner but an improved standard of living for thousands of workers and their families.

Drawing a balance sheet

"At the assembly that took place in our plant on February 9, workers raised five proposals of which one has been implemented and two have been partially implemented," said Iturralde in opening her remarks. The presentation was a report back by the union to the workers on changes they had voted on at the earlier assembly.

This time, the assembly lasted from ten o'clock in the morning to five in the afternoon, and took place while the 335 employees worked, cutting and rolling tobacco leaves on their benches or inspecting and packing cigars. Everyone could listen to the discussion through speakers and could participate through microphones set up on both floors of the factory.

Workers had insisted that basic conditions in the plant — from broken tables to the leaking roof — be improved to allow them to maximize their productive efforts. Iturralde reported that workers had replaced 50 faulty *tablas de rollo* (wooden boards used to roll tobacco leaves on) but needed 100 new ones; had fixed the tobacco cutting machines; and had been able to get rid of the foul-smelling fumes in the factory.

But due to lack of construction materials they had been unable to remodel the building or construct a new roof, which many union members are ready to do through voluntary labor. "The repair of the work center, which we initiated, has been paralyzed," Iturralde's report said.

Workers, however, have painted a new sign with the factory's name above the main entrance of the plant and have been able to keep the facilities cleaner throughout the year. Iturralde and many other workers were most proud of the improvements in the cafeteria, which is adjacent to the plant. Union members have expanded the facility and have painted it with bright colors.

"This is essential for our dignity," said Silvia Lima Cabrera, who has worked 17



Militant/Argiris Malapanis
Cigar maker Waldo Bravo Martínez (left) addressing economic efficiency assembly at the Heroes of Moncada plant in Marianao, Havana, November 30. "Our revolution is at stake in what we're discussing here," he said. Workplace assemblies have increased the self-confidence of working people in Cuba.

years in the plant. "Even with scant resources we can improve our conditions a little."

Food in the cafeteria has improved through better supplies from the state distribution agency and efforts by the workers to grow their own vegetables in a garden next to the cafeteria. The garden is maintained by a worker who is retired from the factory.

A meal of rice, beans, a meat/soy patty, and dessert cost 70 *centavos* (cents) there. In other plants, meal prices range between 50 centavos and 1 Cuban peso, a price which is affordable for most workers and much cheaper than what they have to pay for food at the recently opened agricultural markets or on the black market. Workers' wages at this plant range between 115 and 300 Cuban pesos per month, with a majority making around 220 pesos. Many also earn bonuses for exceeding production goals. (The official exchange rate is 1 peso for US\$1. On the black market, however, the dollar trades between 40 and 60 pesos now — a significant drop from the 1-to-120 exchange rate last summer.)

Improving food quality in plant cafeterias had been a demand by many workers in assembly after assembly. "If we can get a decent meal at work, it helps a lot," said Alba Estevaces, a young metal worker at the Miguel Saavedra Engineering Workshop in Havana's Cerro neighborhood, referring to the hardships created by the serious food shortages in Cuba. The opinions on the shop floor of that factory were very divided over whether the quality of food had improved at all. One of the production workers said that nothing had changed through the workers assemblies.

During the meeting at Heroes of Moncada, Iturralde said the fourth proposal workers had made last February was to improve the way tobacco was packed and shipped to the factory, since low quality of raw materials means unnecessary waste and lost time in processing. "This proposal has gone nowhere," she said. Later during the assembly, workers reiterated their demand that management take action on this front.

Material incentives

"A system of material incentives linked to productivity and record of attendance will finally be put into effect December 1," Iturralde said in concluding her report. She was referring to the program that has now been implemented in three industries — tobacco, electricity, and longshore — giving workers with good attendance and productivity records up to 5 percent of their pay in dollar equivalent certificates enabling them to purchase goods in what Cubans call *shoppings*, stores stocked with imported goods that trade only in hard currency.

This system of incentives has been implemented, we were told, in an effort to keep highly skilled workers in these industries from quitting in search of more remunerative employment in the tourism sector or through self-employed trades.

Help the 'Militant' provide eyewitness coverage from Cuba and South Africa



Militant/Argiris Malapanis
Mary-Alice Waters (right) speaking with workers at Heroes of Moncada plant.

The *Militant's* eyewitness reports on political developments in Cuba and South Africa continue in this issue.

Militant correspondents have organized three reporting trips to Cuba over the past two months, including coverage of the recently returned youth brigade that visited the country. Feature articles on the new agricultural markets, farm cooperatives, factory assemblies, and December meeting of Cuba's National Assembly continue with the article on this page.

Coverage of struggles by rural

workers and gold miners, as well as post-apartheid reconstruction and development efforts led by the African National Congress, was gathered by a four-person reporting team during the last two weeks of December.

Since mid-December, readers of the *Militant* have contributed some \$3,000 towards helping to meet the expenses of these reporting teams. This includes \$600 raised by socialist workers who are members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) at a meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, last month. The *Militant* depends on generous contributions by our readers to make possible this first-hand coverage. Please send your contribution today!

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Services available to workers have also been improved. Workers are now able to repair bicycles, shoes, and household appliances in the plant at a minimum cost. Hairdressing, postal, and other services will also be available on the premises.

Similar measures are being implemented or improved in other factories. "Having these services on the spot is a big help given the transportation problem," Mercedes Hernández, union representative at the Cubana de Acero steelworks, said. (Because of lack of oil and spare parts for repairs, public transportation is still a nightmare. Many workers have to wait for hours to catch a bus or hitch a ride to work.)

Some of these services are not new. The shoe repairer at Cubana de Acero, a plant in Havana's October 10 municipality, which was owned by American Steel before the 1959 revolution, said he's been doing this job for 26 years. Given the severe economic crisis, however, his work becomes even more important. A major shoe repair job, he said, costs between 3 and 5 Cuban pesos. With an acute shortage of shoes, and high prices for new pairs on the black market, more workers try to make the old ones last.

Workers at the Carlos Baliño cigar factory in central Havana told us that improving the range and quality of such services was central to their campaign to lower absenteeism and increase productivity.

Reports by union, manager

The union secretary's report at the Heroes of Moncada assembly was short and concrete. Copies were distributed in writing to union members before the meeting began.

But the manager's report on the plant's financial situation for the year and projections for 1995, which came next on the agenda, was harder to follow. Several workers told us in informal discussions during breaks that the manager gave too many figures without anything in writing for workers to read beforehand and used "too many cryptic terms," as one older production worker put it.

This is a problem that workers continue to confront in many of these assemblies. "It is common that [managers] don't distribute ahead of time the most fundamental aspects of their reports," said Pedro Ross at his December 17 speech to the CTC leadership. "Others continue to use excessively technical and obscure language in presenting administrative reports and they avoid making concrete proposals to deal with the cause of inefficiency in production."

"We have said, and we reiterate," Ross continued, "that this type of error, if it is repeated time after time, can only be the sign of incapable administrators, who do not take seriously their high responsibilities and do not understand the importance of drawing workers more and more into management functions."

Cutting down theft

At the Carlos Baliño cigar factory, workers proudly told us that the plant's big financial deficit in 1993, which they had discussed during a workers assembly on Feb. 1, 1994, had been turned around. They expected the company to have a small profit this year.

A confrontation had taken place between the plant manager and the workers at this factory during the earlier assembly, which *Militant* reporters attended. The workers challenged the management over tobacco that disappeared in 1993, equivalent to 750,000 cigars out of a total production of 4.3 million.

Workers demanded to know details of the factory's finances. The manager's report had blamed employees for the missing tobacco. "I don't like this idea that we're at fault," Hilda Rodríguez, a production worker, shot back at the manager during that meeting, to resounding approval expressed by other union members. "The problem is from the top down and the solution is to be found in the workers directly involved in production," she said.

During a visit at Carlos Baliño on November 30, Rodríguez insisted that workers had turned around the financial situation of the plant since the assembly in February.

How was this done? we asked. Workers



Anelis Ballester operating machine at bottling unit of Dairy Complex outside Havana. Productivity in the department increased 20 percent, she said, since workers changed conveyor belt configuration along the lines suggested by Roberto Bejo, another union member, during workers assembly last January.

simply took charge of security in the plant, she replied, and stopped "giving presents to everyone." The "diversion" of the tobacco stopped, and morale improved.

Absenteeism is also down, Rodríguez said. The same is true at the Heroes of Moncada plant.

One factor is that more women workers, who are a high percentage of the labor force in the tobacco industry, are bringing their kids with them to the plant if they face an emergency problem with child care. They are allowed to bring their children to the manager's office and the administrative personnel arrange to take care of them during working hours. Also, during the summer months, a special program for children of workers is organized at the factory itself. While these programs are not new, we were told, when workers are demoralized child care problems become a good reason to take a day off and stay home. But with improved morale the situation has changed.

Absenteeism became an issue of animated debate during the assembly at the Heroes of Moncada plant. When the manager and a union official from the provincial CTC attempted to lay blame on the workers for "excessive unjustified absenteeism and accidents on the job," at least two took the floor to protest.

"The fact is, we've been more careful while cutting tobacco or lifting boxes," Silvia Lima Cabrera said. She pointed out that the figures given on days lost due to injuries on the job were wrong, since they included workers who had accidents riding bicycles to work, playing sports, or at home.

"You have to stop this stuff about unjustified absenteeism," Waldo Bravo Martínez, with 33 years in the factory, said angrily. Workers began banging their blades loudly on the benches to show their approval, in the traditional fashion of expression by tobacco workers in the plants. Bravo said absenteeism was in fact 2 percent lower compared to the previous year and that most workers have been putting in 12- to 14-hour days in October and November to meet production goals. "This effort must be commended, not chastised," he concluded.

Increasing productivity

During the workers assembly at the Dairy Complex outside Havana on Jan. 31, 1994, a considerable amount of discussion had focused on workers making suggestions to improve productivity under the adverse conditions they face.

Milk production in the factory fell from 700,000 tons in 1989 to 300,000 in 1993. The company used to import powdered milk, the main raw material, from East Germany at \$650 per ton. Now the state enterprise has to buy powdered milk at \$1,900 per ton using hard currency. There hasn't been any fresh milk processed at the plant for nearly three years, which many workers attribute to lack of nutri-

tious fodder that also used to be imported from East Germany. With the drastic drop in production, many of the 1,300 employees found themselves with little to do at work, which caused demoralization and was a big topic of discussion during last year's assembly.

During a visit at this dairy products plant on November 28, Ricardo Buchillón, the union secretary, said in an interview that the deficit of 15 million pesos the enterprise faced in 1993 has been completely eliminated. "We expect at least a 3 million surplus this year," he stated.

Buchillón said one factor for the financial turnaround was taking seriously and implementing many of the proposals aimed at increasing productivity and cutting waste that workers made at the first assembly last January.

When Lázaro Valdez Monte, for example, supervisor of the bottling division of the plant, complained during the January 31 meeting that workers in that unit were breaking too many bottles, several protested strongly. "The fact of the matter

is that the way the conveyor belts are set up is very faulty," Roberto Bejo, a production worker, said. He explained that workers had to literally yank cases of bottled milk off the belts, resulting in many broken bottles. He then made proposals on how to reorganize his unit.

We visited the bottling unit of the factory this time. Workers showed us proudly how they changed the conveyor belt, along the lines of Bejo's suggestion. "Productivity in our department has increased from 5,000 to 6,000 bottles per hour since January," said Anelis Ballester, a 21-year-old worker, as she operated the bottling machine. "Jams in the belt are now rare," she added. The scrap rate in the unit has been reduced from 18 to 11 broken bottles per 1,000.

Bejo has moved on to the cheese department of the complex in an attempt to spread the example he helped set at the bottling unit. "This gives me confidence that we're in charge of our revolution," Bejo stated later in an interview outside the cheese plant.

Buchillón told us that workers had reorganized security since our last visit as well, which has helped reduce theft to a minimum in the complex. They also implemented another proposal made at the assembly: collecting plastic containers thrown away by other enterprises, sterilizing them, and using them to pack ice cream or yogurt. This step contributed to reducing waste, since containers made of bad quality paper often break open. Machinists at the plant are now in the process of installing molds to produce their own plastic containers on the premises. "This will be more difficult because of lack of raw materials," Buchillón said. "But we'll continue to use workers' ingenuity."

Solving problem of employment

While fresh milk is still lacking, workers have put on new lines to produce soy milk and yogurt. This has made the biggest difference in increasing production and has for now solved the problem of excess personnel in this factory, we were told. Workers proudly said that absenteeism was only 3 percent at the milk products plant, one of the lowest rates in the country.

The November 21 issue of *Trabajadores*, the newspaper of the CTC, reported that following the congress of the Food Workers Union last January, work-

Continued on Page 10



Tobacco workers during economic efficiency assembly

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Canada rulers weigh scope of social cuts

BY ROBERT SIMMS

TORONTO — The debate among Canada's rulers over the scope of the cutbacks the federal government should impose on working people in its February budget has become sharper as the value of the Canadian dollar continues to decline and interest rates rise. Montreal's *La Presse* newspaper described the debate within the government itself as "the battle of the titans."

There is no dispute among the rulers on the need to carry out massive cutbacks in health care, unemployment benefits, education, and welfare in order to slash the social wage won by the labor movement through decades of struggle.

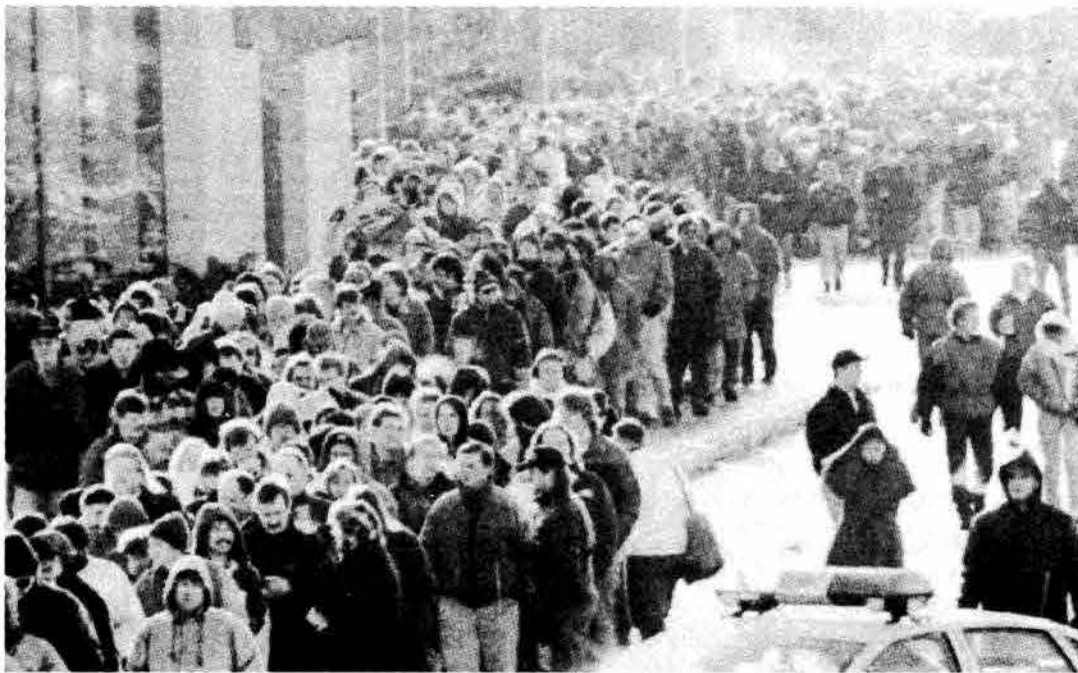
The rulers' debate is over what the scope of the cuts should be. The federal government headed by Liberal Party prime minister Jean Chrétien is worried about provoking substantial resistance if it cuts too deep. Already thousands of students are expected to take part in cross-country actions on January 25 protesting the proposal to slash CAN\$2 (CAN\$1=US\$0.70) billion in education spending. Another major demonstration against cutbacks and for jobs has been called in Montreal on February 12 by a coalition of Quebec's three major labor federations together with student, women's rights, and community groups. (Canada's official unemployment rate is close to 10 percent.)

Ottawa is especially worried about provoking major resistance prior to the "sovereignty referendum" called by the Quebec government for sometime this year. The referendum is aimed at significantly increasing Quebec's powers at the expense of the federal government. Ottawa is carrying out a massive campaign aimed at convincing a majority of Quebec voters to support the status quo rather than, it argues, breaking up "the best country in the world."

Who has responsibility?

At the same time the Chrétien government is campaigning to convince working people to accept responsibility for paying off the government's debts by supporting major cutbacks in social services. Ottawa has already announced its intention to impose over \$6 billion in cutbacks in its next budget, beginning with education spending and unemployment insurance.

The government has floated trial balloons to test the reaction to other major cuts. Leaked government reports propose that the federal government hand over all



Some 10,000 people looking for work showed up at dawn outside the General Motors plant in Toronto, Ontario, January 10. The federal government plans massive cutbacks in education spending and unemployment insurance, amounting to more than CAN\$6 billion in the next budget. Initial resistance to slashing of social wage has come from students and some trade unions.

responsibility for social services and education to Canada's ten provinces. This would allow the rulers to carry out cutbacks province-by-province while trying to avoid provoking a united cross-country fightback by working people.

Another leaked report raises the idea of increasing the age when workers start receiving old age social security pensions from 65 to 67. The *Globe and Mail* argues that such a move would lead to savings of CAN\$2 billion for every year pension eligibility is cut back.

The Liberal government, like capitalist governments around the world, is seeking to justify cutbacks on the basis of the need to eliminate the deficit. Finance minister Paul Martin has vowed that Ottawa will achieve its financial goals "come hell or high water." The convulsions in world financial and currency markets in the wake of the precipitous decline of the Mexican peso have led to a sharpening of the rulers' debate. Some in the ruling class have been warning of the danger that the federal government will lose its nerve and not carry through sufficient cuts. "Leadership is the issue in Ottawa today, where taking no risks is the biggest risk of all," admonished a *Globe and Mail* editorial.

A comment by an obscure Toronto market trader, Al Friedberg, that appeared in the *Globe* January 17 became a major catalyst in the debate and touched off a drop

in the value of the Canadian dollar that same day. It fell another half cent to 70.49 U.S. cents. The Canadian dollar has fallen by 17 percent in comparison to the U.S. currency over the past two and half years.

No solution in sight

Friedberg, of the Friedberg Mercantile Group, told the *Globe* that the government debt problem won't change "until we have a massive crisis...a one-day drop of 10 percent" in the value of the Canadian dollar. Such a crisis would come, he predicted, and added, "Unless Canada in the next two or three years takes a tremendous, tremendous chop out of spending, there will be no solution." The continuing fall in the Canadian dollar pushed the prime lending rate in Canada for major corporate borrowers to 9.25 percent, nearly twice as high as a year ago.

Friedberg's remarks came just a few days after a *Wall Street Journal* editorial called Canada "an honorary member of the Third World in the unmanageability of its debt problem."

The problem, put bluntly in an article on Canada in the January 11 *Wall Street Journal*, is "persistently high budget deficits, which in turn reflect big spending on generous social-welfare programs and overly rigid labor markets. Nor does there appear to be much political will to attack these problems."

What Bay Street — Canada's financial center — and international finance capital are telling Ottawa is that CAN\$6 billion in cuts is not nearly enough, given that the total federal and provincial debt is close to CAN\$700 billion, of which almost 40 percent is held by investors outside Canada. Ted Carmichael of J.P. Morgan Securities Canada argues that the cutbacks for the next year must be more like CAN\$12 billion, double Ottawa's projections.

Canada has the second highest ratio of government debt to Gross Domestic Product of any imperialist country in the world, after Italy. Business spokesmen are also warning the government not to try to reduce its deficit by increased taxes on corporations and Canada's wealthy elite.

When the *Wall Street Journal* complains about "overly rigid labor markets," they mean wages that are too high, unemployment insurance and welfare that are too "generous," and too many workers unwilling to take any job at any wage. In their view, the Canadian government has to soften up working people. They are demanding a greater proportion of the value of labor power for private employers, which they hope to get by rolling back the social wage represented by health, education, pensions, and welfare.

The Canadian rulers agree this is the direction they have to take. The fact that their major competitor, U.S. capitalism, has been much more successful than they in pushing back working people's wages and living standards means that Canada's capitalists must speed up their attacks even more if they are to survive in a world of intensifying capitalist competition and trade wars.

To point the way forward for the federal and provincial governments, the big business media has been trumpeting "success" stories — provincial governments that have taken steps to balance their budgets on the backs of working people.

Special attention has been paid to Alberta, where the Conservative Party provincial government of Ralph Klein has nearly eliminated a \$3 billion annual deficit with severe cuts in every direction, including slashing 40,000 people out of 90,000 from welfare rolls. Honorable mention goes to the New Democratic Party government of Saskatchewan, which has closed dozens of rural hospitals, and the Liberal government in New Brunswick, which has forced people on welfare to work for subminimum wages.

Cuban workers increase their management role

Continued from Page 9

ers at other plants decided to adopt the example of the Havana Dairy Complex and initiate manufacturing of soy yogurt. The process began in April at a dairy products plant in Holguín, where workers adapted the Brazilian technology from the Havana complex and began installing their own production lines for soy products. Plants in four provinces now operate these new lines and the process will be spread in all 17 dairy products enterprises throughout the country, *Trabajadores* reported.

Soy beans, which are rich in protein, are also widely used with small quantities of meat to produce "meat patties." Many Cubans dislike the taste of these products and joke — with the trenchant humor that is characteristic of everyday life here — that the "island is being overtaken by a soy culture."

Workers at the Havana Dairy Complex, however, said the government will be in a position within a few months to make available soy yogurt and milk to all children from 7 to 13 years old. With the food scarcities, milk is only guaranteed now to children up to 7 years old and to some of the elderly. A number of Cubans had remarked to us how hard it is on children to be abruptly cut off the milk ration on their seventh birthday.

Of course, in most industries there is no option to increase production by using alternative raw materials. So the problem of excess personnel and the threat of unemployment remain acute throughout the is-

land. Industry in Cuba operates today at only an estimated 35 percent of capacity, compared to 85 percent plus before 1989.

According to new regulations adopted this year, workers who lose their job receive 100 percent of their wages the first month and 70 percent for a period of three months. Beyond that, benefits depend on years of employment. Those with higher seniority also get preference in picking options for alternative employment. If workers who are laid off turn down offers to relocate elsewhere, including working in agriculture, they eventually lose these benefits.

In all of the five factories *Militant* reporters visited, we were told that they have no difficulty filling the roster of volunteers to join agricultural contingents for one- or two-year stints to help increase food production. These contingents have generally replaced earlier 15-day mobilizations in the countryside of larger numbers of workers.

Most workers we interviewed expressed the view that the 15-day volunteer brigades had become a very inefficient way to use their labor — by the time they got used to the work it was time to return to their regular job. "The [two-week mobilizations] are not very effective," said Omar Berril, a young worker at Cubana de Acero who is a member of the Union of Young Communists. "It takes at least a week to adjust to the new working conditions, to get over aches and pains. So we're now working on sending out volun-

tary brigades for longer periods."

At most of these factories, workers have also increased use of plots of land adjacent to the plants to produce food for the factory cafeteria and for their families' consumption.

'Our revolution is at stake'

The last point at the workers assembly at Heroes of Moncada on November 30, was a discussion on a proposal adopted in principle by Cuba's parliament during its August 4 meeting: instituting a new contribution by workers to the social security fund, to be deducted from wages. We will return to that discussion in our next article.

After that debate was over workers elected a new union executive board by secret ballot. Several referred to Iturralde's report and the discussion it generated in making nominations for their leadership body.

On the way out of the plant, as the sun was setting, Waldo Bravo remarked calmly in his farewell, "Our revolution is at stake in what we are discussing here. And we will defend it, no matter what the odds are."

A third article will cover the debate in Cuba's National Assembly and in the workers parliaments on income and social security taxes.



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

Shoe repairer at Cubana de Acero steelworks in Havana. With an acute shortage of shoes, and high black market prices, more workers use his services in the plant to make old pairs last.

GM gives in as union shuts down key plant

BY STEVE MARSHALL

FLINT, Michigan — Shutting down a strategic parts plant here for four days, the United Auto Workers (UAW) forced General Motors to agree January 20 to hire 663 more workers over the next 18 months.

The strike by 6,700 members of UAW Local 651 at GM's AC Delco Complex cut off electronic parts used throughout GM's system. It also affected some Ford and Chrysler factories. The walkout forced the rapid shutdown of 10 other plants, idling 32,000 auto workers, and threatened to close many more.

The UAW is calling on the auto giant to hire more workers nationwide. Last fall the union struck a GM plant in Anderson, Indiana, and the Buick City complex in Flint. At least four other UAW locals in the upper Midwest — in Janesville, Wisconsin; Ft. Wayne, Indiana; and Pontiac and Grand Blanc, Michigan — have asked the national union to approve strike deadlines, all over the issue of jobs.

More than 2,000 workers gathered at a downtown hotel January 22 to hear UAW officials explain the new agreement. After several short speeches and a question-and-answer period, they voted to approve the pact by a 96 percent margin. The meeting was open to news media.

Everyone in attendance received a special eight-page edition of the *Sparkler*, Local 651's newspaper, that summarized the contents of the agreement. It includes a specific hiring schedule, with dates and numbers, and pledges by GM to invest \$72 million in the plant and actively seek new contracts.

The pact contains a "commitment by management to avoid spot buys [outsourcing]." In addition, it calls for an end to job banks — make-work projects for employees whose jobs have been cut — in favor of "real work" positions.

UAW members discussed the strike and the agreement in interviews outside the meeting hall. "This is very important," said Louis, a member of Local 651. "It shows the union is strong. We've got some other things to take care of, like Caterpillar." Forcing GM to hire, he continued, would not only reduce the strain on those currently working. "We need to get

some people off the street, too," he said.

"We need people, man!" said Milt, who works at GM's truck and bus plant here. He came to the meeting to support Local 651 because workers at his plant face a similar situation. Seven-day workweeks have lowered the quality of the plant's products, he said, and have raised the number of injuries and other problems. "Even at home, people are drinking more, they're all stressed out," he said. Milt remarked that the truck and bus plant would have closed had the strike continued.

The last contract, signed in 1993, included a "two-for-one" attrition clause, obligating the company to hire one worker for every two who retired, died, or otherwise left the plant.

In comments from the floor as well as in interviews, several Local 651 members noted that GM had agreed last February to hire some 270 new workers, but failed to employ a single one.

"And they're already studying getting by this one," said Mary Ann, who works on the AC side of the plant.

The following morning's *Detroit Free Press* reported that "GM spokesman Dan



Militant/Steve Marshall

Strikers at AC Delco plant in Flint, Michigan, January 19. The walkout forced GM to agree to hire several hundred more workers and make other concessions.

Dolan confirmed that the company agreed to hire 'several hundred people' and make 'some capital investment,' but he would not confirm numbers quoted by the union.

"There's no guarantee we will be hiring these folks," Dolan said.

The same *Free Press* article also fea-

tured a comment by UAW member Roger Anderson, who said the strike "sends a message to the rest of the unions: Yes, go out on strike. It's a good tactic."

Steve Marshall is member of the United Transportation Union in Detroit.

Talks recount maritime union struggles

BY OSBORNE HART

LOS ANGELES — During the Western Regional Socialist Educational Conference held here December 31-January 2, classes on the history of socialists in the maritime unions during the Korean and second world wars sparked a lively discussion.

Tom Leonard, veteran Socialist Workers Party leader and a maritime union member for 10 years, presented classes on "Racist and Anti-Immigrant Discrimination and the Trade Unions: The Experience of the Maritime Union" and "Trade Unions and the Fight Against Imperialist War."

Leonard's talks traced the rise of the maritime industry and its dominance in the transportation of commodities and passengers from the California Gold Rush days through the 1930s labor radicalization; opposition to World War II; and the struggles against Jim Crow segregation. His knowl-

edge comes from direct and collective experiences with other politically organized socialist workers in the shipping unions.

Leonard currently is researching and compiling the written and oral recollections of SWP members in the Seafarers International Union, as well as Sailors' Union of the Pacific, and National Maritime Union. His classes are the result of this effort so far.

California Gold Rush

The discovery of gold in California in 1848 attracted large numbers of immigrants from around the world. With the accelerated economic growth, particularly the rapid expansion of lumber and shipping, the population in San Francisco quickly swelled to several hundred thousand. Chinese immigrants made up a large part of this increase.

"San Francisco became a center of union organizing," Leonard said. "With

the introduction of steam power came the growth of the maritime industry" and the need to organize seamen.

Seamen from other countries "wanted to work on U.S. ships because of better conditions," Leonard explained. At that time immigrants made up 30 percent of maritime workers, some of whom became leaders of the unions.

Anti-immigrant discrimination, however, which was particularly directed against Chinese workers, divided and weakened union efforts. Leaders of many of the West Coast unions, including seamen's unions, backed virulently racist anti-Chinese agitation. In 1882, the U.S. government adopted the Chinese Exclusion Act, which banned new Chinese immigration.

"Aping the boss class, some maritime unions excluded Chinese workers from membership, even though many seamen were Chinese," Leonard said. Anti-immigrant and racial discrimination remains an issue in the maritime industry.

Leonard also described the imposition of anti-Black Jim Crow practices on board ship and in ports of call by ship owners and the U.S. military. During World War II and the period afterwards, successful protests by Black, foreign-born, and other seamen organized in the National Maritime Union (NMU) helped set back these racist practices.

"U.S. Lines imposed Jim Crow on its passenger ships," Leonard told those attending his class. "The employers refused to accept Black union members dispatched from NMU hiring halls. This led to a work stoppage and strike that forced U.S. Lines to back down."

'In Defense of Marxism' set to be rereleased

IN DEFENSE OF MARXISM by Leon Trotsky. 342 pp. New York: Pathfinder Press, 1995. \$24.95.

BY MICHAEL BAUMANN

A new edition of Leon Trotsky's *In Defense of Marxism* will be released in February by Pathfinder Press.

The volume, written as World War II broke out, delivers exactly what the title proclaims. Trotsky defends, with polemical clarity, basic tenets of scientific socialism that had come under attack within the workers movement as middle-class layers buckled in face of intensifying wartime pressures.

In the Socialist Workers Party, a political crisis had been set off by the signing of the "nonaggression" pact between the governments of the Soviet Union and Germany (the Stalin-Hitler pact) in August 1939 and the beginning of the war several days later.

Following the pact, a wave of anti-Soviet propaganda swept through the imperialist democracies, the United States included. The social democratic leadership of the labor movement joined the government in beating the drums for war with Germany.

A majority of the SWP, based largely in the party's fractions in the industrial unions, were well prepared for the events — Trotsky had predicted such a pact as early as 1933 — and stood up to the pressure. But a sizable minority in the leadership of the SWP lost their bearings and began to insist there was no longer anything progressive in the Soviet Union worth defending.

Led politically by former philosophy professor James Burnham, this petty-bourgeois faction also included well-known party leaders Max Shachtman and

Martin Abern. Their abandonment of the Soviet workers state, one of the central conquests of the world working class, in reality reflected a much more fundamental retreat, Trotsky pointed out.

In "A Letter to James P. Cannon," written in September 1939 and opening this volume, Trotsky explains that the real implication of the minority's position was that the working class was incapable of carrying out a socialist revolution, "that all the revolutionary potentialities of the world proletariat are exhausted."

In "Again and Once More Again on the Nature of the USSR," written the following month, Trotsky compares the Soviet Union to a trade union to underscore how far the minority had retreated from working-class politics.

"The trade unions of France, Great Britain, the United States, and other countries support completely the counter-revolutionary policies of their bourgeoisies," Trotsky points out.

"This does not prevent us from labeling them as trade unions, from supporting their progressive steps and from defending them against the bourgeoisie. Why is it impossible to employ the same method with the counter-revolutionary workers state? In the last analysis a workers state is a trade union which has conquered power."

The first article opens with a description of the features of a petty-bourgeois formation that fit the Burnham grouping to a T: "a disdainful attitude toward theory and an inclination toward eclecticism; disrespect for the tradition of their own organization; anxiety for personal 'independence' at the expense of anxiety for objective truth; nervousness instead of consistency; readiness to jump from one position to another; lack

of understanding of revolutionary centralism and hostility toward it; and finally, inclination to substitute clique ties and personal relationships for party discipline."

This edition includes an introduction by Doug Jenness. It also includes an introduction by George Novack and Joseph Hansen, two longtime leaders of the SWP who were part of the majority in the 1939-40 fight. Their introduction, written for the original edition in 1942, was updated in 1973 to give an account of the subsequent political careers of the main participants.

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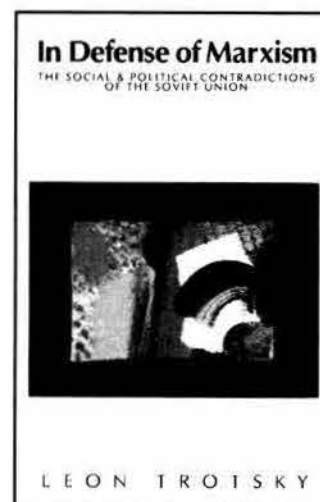
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Passports seized

Continued from front page
from spending money in Cuba, a regulation that effectively cuts off most travel. The Clinton administration tightened these unconstitutional regulations last August. Those prosecuted for violating the travel ban can face up to 10 years in jail and fines as high as \$250,000.

"The unconstitutional travel restrictions Washington imposes," said Riley, "are part and parcel of the U.S. government's policy of aggression against Cuba, which includes an inhuman and criminal embargo and is aimed at crushing the socialist revolution in that Caribbean country."

The actions of the customs agents, said Vance in a telephone interview, "didn't have to do with whether or not it was a legal trip, it was just the fact that we went to Cuba and they don't like Cuba. They used intimidation tactics, acting like it was a big scandal they were hoping to break open. Trying to get us to reveal information we didn't have, like other people's flight information."

Vance stated he went on the trip because, "the United States is taking such drastic measures to oppress Cuba. I thought it was a unique opportunity to see for myself how the people of Cuba look at this situation."

Riley said brigade participants met students and workers while visiting an agricultural camp in Ciego de Avila province, a sugar mill, schools, day-care centers, hospitals, a biotechnology center, and recreation areas.

He encouraged all supporters of democratic rights to send letters to the U.S. State Department and the Department of Treasury in Washington, D.C., protesting the passport seizures and demanding their immediate return.

For more information contact the Youth Brigade to Cuba, P.O. Box 1801, New York, NY 10009; Tel.: (212) 677-4356. Fax: (212) 388-1659.

Cuba, U.S. gov't resume talks

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

NEW YORK — The Cuban and U.S. governments held a third round of migration talks here January 18-19. Cuban National Assembly president Ricardo Alarcón, who headed the delegation from Havana, said there had been "reasonable" progress in implementation of the immigration accord the two sides signed last September.

Washington agreed in September to grant at least 20,000 visas a year to Cubans wishing to emigrate to the United States, while Havana pledged to stop the uncontrolled flow of people leaving for U.S. shores in small boats. More than 30,000 "rafters" left Cuba last summer and were detained at the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Some 8,000 were later moved to detention camps on U.S. military bases in Panama.

Alarcón reported the U.S. government has issued at least 4,000 residence visas since September. This is much more than Washington has granted in previous years as part of its long-standing policy of restricting legal immigration from Cuba while encouraging Cubans—for propaganda purposes—to take to the seas in rafts. Several thousand Cubans meeting all requirements have been on a waiting list for years due to U.S. foot-dragging.

In addition to admitting Cubans with relatives in the United States, U.S. officials have set up a lottery system to meet the 20,000 quota. At least 150,000 have already applied to emigrate, Alarcón reported.

The Cuban representative added, however, that Washington continues to restrict family visits between the two countries, even to visit sick relatives. The Clinton administration imposed severe limits on such visits in August 1994 during a series of aggressive U.S. moves against Cuba.

Regarding those still detained at Guantánamo, Alarcón noted that about 1,200 have voluntarily returned to Cuba. He said the Cuban government is opposed to directly admitting the Guantánamo detainees into the United States, except for "humanitarian cases," saying that would only encourage further illegal departures. Instead, they must return to Cuba and then apply for emigration.

-MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

The Militant Labor Forum is a weekly free-speech meeting for workers, farmers, youth, and others. All those seeking to advance the fight against injustice and exploitation are welcome to attend and participate in these discussions on issues of importance to working people.

At the Militant Labor Forum you can express your opinion, listen to the views of fellow fighters, and exchange ideas on how best to advance the interests of workers and farmers the world over.

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Eyewitness Report Back from South Africa. Speaker: Vanna Knap, *Militant* correspondent at December 1994 national conference of the African National Congress. Sat., Feb. 4, 7:30 p.m. 2546 W. Pico Blvd. Donation: \$4. Translation into Spanish. Tel: (213) 380-9460.

San Francisco

Report from Revolutionary Cuba. Panel discussion. Sat., Feb. 4, 7 p.m. Dinner, 5 p.m. 3284 23rd Street (near 24th and Mission BART). Donation \$4. Forum and dinner \$10. Tel: (415) 285-5323.

ILLINOIS

Peoria

Revolutionary Cuba Today. Speakers: Naomi

Craine, member of Young Socialists just returned from a three-week speaking tour hosted by Cuba's Union of Young Communists; Sukul Baul and Dannen Vance, participants in recent youth brigade to Cuba. Sat., Feb., 11, 7 p.m. Bradley University, Room 254, Baker Hall (on Main Street). Donation: \$5. Tel: (309) 674-9441.

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston

Challenges in the New South Africa: Eyewitness Report. Speaker: *Militant* correspondent recently returned from South Africa. Sat., Feb. 4, 7:30 p.m. 780 Tremont St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (617) 247-6772.

MICHIGAN

Detroit

Rebellion in Chechnya. Speaker: John Sarge, Socialist Workers Party, and member, United Auto Workers. Sat., Feb. 4, 7:30 p.m. 7414 Woodward Avenue (1 block north of Grand). Donation: \$4. Tel: (313) 875-0100.

NORTH CAROLINA

Greensboro

Race, Class, and Intelligence. Speaker: Diane Shur, Socialist Workers Party, member, Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union. Sun., Feb. 5, 6 p.m. 2000-C South Elm-Eugene St. Donation: \$3. Tel: (910) 272-5996.

Caterpillar and union begin talks

BY JAMES HARRIS

PEORIA, Illinois — Caterpillar, Inc., and the United Auto Workers (UAW) held negotiations January 20 for the first time in the seven-month-long strike. The talks took place in Louisville, Kentucky, in the presence of a federal mediator.

A factor prodding the company to the bargaining table was the tumble its stocks took following the release of its fourth quarter earnings. Despite record quarterly profits of \$279 million and the best overall year in company history, stocks plunged \$3.88 a share on January 19 and another \$2.12 the following day.

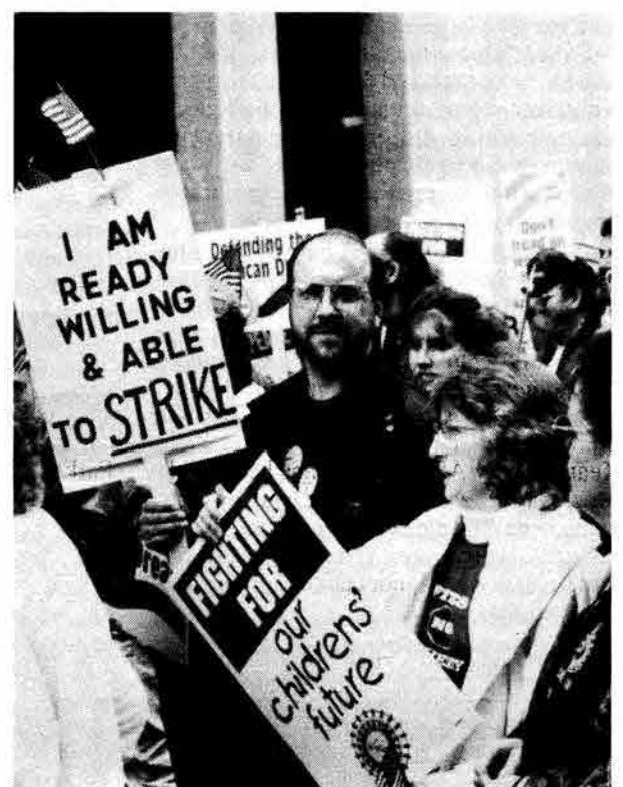
Wall Street is concerned over the long-term effects of the strike. "Sales were terrific," said Mitchell Quain, an analyst with Wertheim Shroder, "yet earnings were about as expected. Below the top line, the numbers were disappointing. Gross margins and operating margins were disappointing." Quain added that "despite the company's rhetoric," about the effect of the UAW strike, Caterpillar is feeling the pinch. "Now we understand why Caterpillar is going back to the bargaining table," he continued.

Caterpillar vice president Wayne Zimmerman did an abrupt about face after Wall Street sent its message. In a January

17 letter to Caterpillar employees, he warned, "I am not allowing my hopes to run too high, and you shouldn't either." Later, Zimmerman said the talks had been "an absolute plus. We're moving ahead."

The company also sent a letter to the union outlining new rules for UAW members when they return to work. Entitled "Standards of Conduct Inside Caterpillar Facilities," the rules include stipulations in direct opposition to what many workers here see as key questions of the strike. These include denying workers the right to wear buttons and T-shirts depicting their struggle; preventing workers from conducting or participating in demonstrations and rallies, except those called by the company; and blocking the union from filing grievances management deems repetitive.

Talks are set to resume January 31. The mood among many strikers is wait and see.



Militant/John Sarge
Caterpillar strikers and supporters at a May 7, 1994, solidarity rally in Peoria, Illinois.

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WASHINGTON

Seattle

Stop Attacks on Abortion Clinics. Speakers: Deborah Higgins, Socialist Workers Party, member, Sheet Metal Workers International Association; Sibyl Perkins, Socialist Workers Party, member, International Association of Machinists. Both attended the January 22 Boston march. Sat., Feb., 4, 7:30 p.m. 1405 E. Madison Avenue. Donation: \$3. Tel: (206) 323-1755.

CANADA

Montreal

Cuban Workers and Peasants Defend Their Socialist Revolution. Speaker: Michel Dugré, Communist League, participant in the Havana international solidarity conference. Sat., Feb., 4, 7:30 p.m. 4581 St-Denis (Mont-Royal metro). Donation: \$4. Tel: (514) 284-7369.

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland

United States and World Politics Today: What the 1994 U.S. Elections Revealed. Speaker: Paul Mailhot, National Committee member of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States and staff writer for the *Militant*. Sat., Feb. 4, 7:30 p.m. Knox Community Centre, 4 Birdwood Cres, Parnell. Donation: \$3. Tel: (9) 379-3075.

26507. Tel: (304) 296-0055.

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And still the poor complain — One cruel result of the fall of the Mexican peso is that 14 of Mexico's 24 billionaires are no longer billionaires.



Harry Ring

They speak a different language — "There was not even so much as a 'Thanks for the good work.'" — Jan Gimber, one of the first 77 workers to be fired in

bankrupt Orange County.

They were given 90 minutes to pack their personal stuff and clear out.

Gang-busters — The last we heard, a kindergarten student in Buena Park, California, was facing expulsion for bringing a razor to school. He found it while waiting for the school bus, and, on the bus showed it to friends. The driver turned him over to the principal.

They call it two-faced? — The right to "extend and revise" their remarks in the Congressional Record has long been abused by Congress members, often to the

point of falsification. Under a new rule, they will continue to "extend and revise," but words not actually spoken will appear in a different type face.

The can-do society — We reported on the New York psychiatrists who offer \$175-an-hour therapy to busy execs while taking them in a van to their office, the airport, etc. One of the doctors agreed this was nontraditional but, she exclaimed, "In America you can do this."

Don't leave home without it — An L.A. art collector flew to New York and bought a painting for \$2.5 million on his American

Express card, entitling him to 2.5 million free flight miles. An American Express spokesperson assured, "Any card member can do this."

For whom the bell tolls — Hit by angry protests, the hi-IQ Mensa Society bounced the editor of the L.A. chapter's newsletter. She had run two articles recommending that the aged, infirm, homeless, and retarded be exterminated. The Mensa prez said the brouhaha was costing time, money, and membership.

Ivory and gold tower — Preparing a new edition of its directory, the Harvard Alumni Association

sent a questionnaire to graduates. They seem interested in how folks are doing financially. A choice of income brackets ranges from under \$50,000 to over \$3 million. Titles like admiral or baroness will be listed, as well as second addresses (summer homes, etc.).

Doesn't even need a union — Billionaire Gordon Getty bought a \$3.75-million mansion next door to his so he could build a music room and add a swimming pool.

Critics to the contrary, Getty sees himself as a composer. Also, he says, he's a workaholic. But, he adds, "I don't have to do the work that the boss says."

Australia farmers protest gov't drought inaction

BY MARNIE KENNEDY AND RON POULSEN

PARKES AND MUDGE, Australia — Hundreds of family farmers and supporters across drought-stricken south and central parts of this state lined major country roads January 11 to publicize their demands for an extension of assistance payments and relief from recent government-imposed interest rate hikes. The farmers set up roadside "information stops" at seven rural centers to explain their demands.

Called "Operation Dust Storm," the actions were organized by activists in the New South Wales Farmers' Association and the Rural Action Movement. The farmers got a sympathetic response from many who stopped, especially truck drivers.

Although 98 percent of the state is officially "drought declared," only 6.5 percent of the state's farmers qualify for even the basic aid promised by Canberra. To be eligible, farms have to suffer under drought conditions for 24 out of 36 months. Of the much trumpeted A\$164 (A\$1=US\$0.76) million promised by Prime Minister Paul Keating, only A\$15 million has been paid. Most of the assistance received has already been canceled out by climbing interest rates, which have added some A\$450 million to farmers' indebtedness in the last four months.

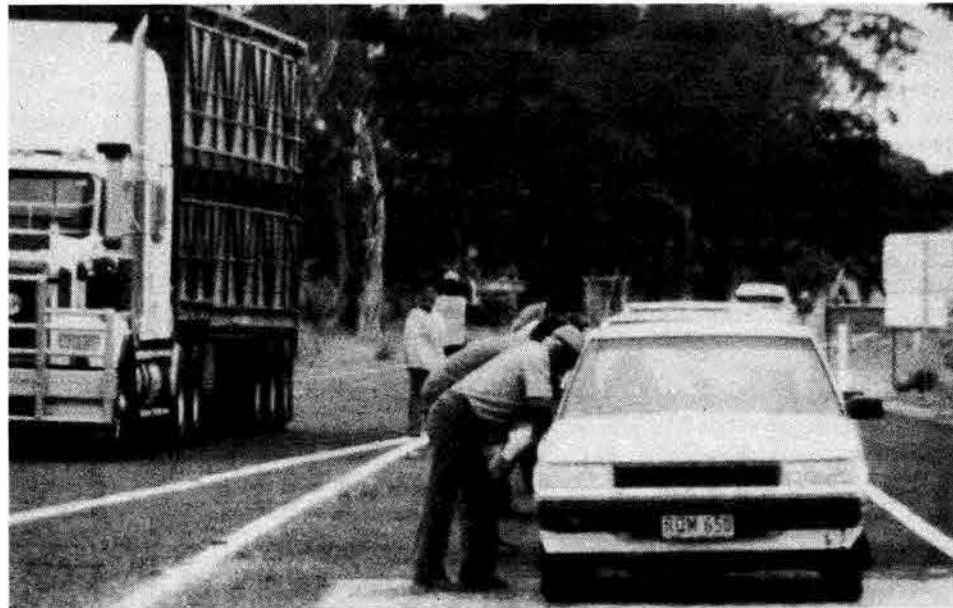
Drought conditions spreading

Drought conditions have been spreading for half a decade across the inland cattle- and sheep-grazing lands and wheat-growing belt of the southeast of the continent. The crisis has grown worse over the past year, with some areas receiving the lowest rainfall on record.

Pastures have browned or been reduced to dust. Even some rivers have dried up. Numerous communities now have water as well as stock feed trucked in, escalating the costs of the drought, which government assistance only partially offsets.

Meanwhile family farm incomes are virtually at a standstill. The winter wheat harvest in 1994 was much lower than the Australian Wheat Board's projection of 600,000 metric tons, and a fraction of 1993's 5.5 million metric tons.

This is the second severe drought in a little more than a decade. The last, in



Militant/Ron Poulsen

Farmers explain their fight to passing motorists at January 11 protest in Parkes

1982-83, ushered in a rural depression. This pattern is being repeated again. But as one woman farmer explained at the Parkes protest, "It's not the drought. We've survived plenty of droughts before. But this time we don't have any reserves left. I blame government policies for that."

Many family farmers already in debt to the banks have been pushed to the brink by the loss of farm incomes coupled with high drought costs and escalating interest rates.

In some areas, farmers' indebtedness is as much as a quarter of a million dollars. Yet, with farms that would be worth several times that in good times, farm families with zero incomes cannot even qualify for unemployment benefits because of assets' tests.

Farmers from Parkes report that banks have confiscated check books of the most indebted farmers and forced them to submit to bank approval for purchases of essential foodstuffs. Some farm families are surviving only thanks to outside jobs or charity.

Many will be forced off the land

The government Rural Assistance Authority predicts that 20 percent of New South Wales farmers will be forced off the land over the next 12 to 18 months.

Stan and Barbara Cooper own a sheep farm in the Parkes region. In 1980, their bank loan was "locked in" at 11 percent for three years. In 1983, it was jacked up to 16 percent. In 1985, they were told that locked in rates were no longer available and the interest rate shot up to 22 percent. This was followed by another rural recession slashing their income.

In 1989, the Cooper's 6,000 sheep produced a wool clip that sold for A\$120,000. A couple of years later it declined to A\$40,000. Now it is only A\$60,000-A\$70,000.

Another farmer explained that he sold his reduced wheat crop last season at A\$90 per metric ton. Later, when he had to buy back grain for stock feed, the price was A\$196 per ton. Many farmers had similar stories of the savage contradictions of the market system revealed by the drought.

Norm Plummer, a farmer in the Mudgee area, described recently carting in eight loads of grain at a cost of A\$53,000. He can claim 50 percent back from the gov-

ernment. The feed will last about six weeks unless it rains. He has had to cut down his stock of sheep and cattle. "I'm back 20 percent...a lot more are back 70 [percent] to 80 percent on stock," he said.

— 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —

THE MILITANT

Published in the Interest of the Working People
February 6, 1970 Price 10¢

WASHINGTON, D.C., Jan. 24 — The Senate hearing on the safety of birth control pills was closed to the public this week after 30 young women, members of Washington Women's Liberation, objected to the way the hearings have been conducted. The interruption occurred when Sen. Gaylord Nelson, chairman of the subcommittee, refused to respond to the women's request from the floor that they and other women be permitted to testify.

Members of Women's Liberation have attended these hearings for the last two weeks, listening with growing concern to the many possible dangerous side effects of the pill reported by researchers. It is significant that no women (neither those who have suffered side effects nor qualified female research scientists) have been given a voice in the hearings. Significant also is the fact that the only researchers reporting the pill as safe were those funded directly or indirectly by the drug companies.

Seated in twos throughout the hearing room, women rose during a pause in the proceedings and addressed numerous questions to the subcommittee such as: "Why are drug companies deliberately withholding available information on side effects?" "Why are no women testifying on an issue of vital concern to their health and safety?"

When Senator Nelson perceived the women were not going to be seated until their questions were answered, and women allowed to testify, a subcommittee member threw a master switch cutting off the microphones and TV cameras and Nelson ordered the room cleared for a

"recess." The hearings resumed in closed session with only the press and witnesses permitted to enter.

THE MILITANT

PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE
NEW YORK, N.Y. FIVE (5) CENTS

February 3, 1945

DETROIT, Jan. 21 — The rank and file campaign to revoke the no-strike pledge in the current CIO United Automobile Workers [UAW] referendum is daily gathering momentum and support despite the terrific flag-waving propaganda of the CIO and UAW leaders, backed by the corporations, government and rabid Stalinists.

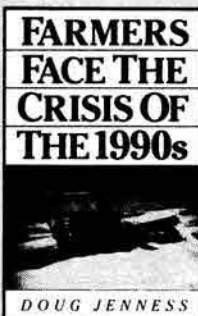
The UAW top bureaucrats, whose main support comes from the strikebreaking Stalinists, are attempting to counter the offensive of the militants with every dirty trick and flag-waving jingo appeal they can devise. A typical example of their methods was demonstrated this afternoon at the regular monthly membership mass meeting of the Press Steel unit of Ford Local 600, attended by approximately 800 persons.

W.G. Grant, Local 600 President and notorious Stalinist frontman, gave a frenzied speech, terming the hundreds of thousands of UAW militants opposed to the no-strike pledge as "enemies of labor." Following this hysterical tirade, the no-strike resolution was introduced.

A rank and file worker demanded the floor to secure the same courtesy of the chair as Grant to opposed the no-strike pledge. The meeting chairman tried to stall him off, but was hooted by the workers. The worker who took the floor then gave a well-prepared, sharply-pointed talk, which frequently brought cheers from the audience. He was interrupted half-way through by the chairman, a Stalinist vice-president, who ruled his time limit at an end. This almost created a riot. But, in order to permit the meeting to proceed, the speaker yielded the floor.

FARMERS FACE THE CRISIS OF THE 1990s

Examines the deepening economic and social crisis in the capitalist world and explains how farmers and workers can unite internationally against the mounting assaults from the billionaire bankers, industrialists, and commodities merchants. \$3.50



Available at bookstores, including those listed on page 12, or write Pathfinder, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. If ordering by mail, please include \$3 to cover postage and handling.

Return seized passports now!

The actions of U.S. customs agents at Chicago's O'Hare airport on January 21 and 22, when they seized the passports of three youth returning from a trip to Cuba, constitute a grave threat to democratic rights — the right to free exchange of ideas, the right to travel and see for yourself, and freedom of the press.

The youth on this international brigade were traveling on editorial assignments from news media to find out first hand the realities of the Cuban revolution and report back on what they saw. This is precisely what Washington's travel restrictions aim to stifle, even though this trip was within the bounds of current regulations.

For 36 years, the U.S. government has not eased its incessant efforts to squeeze socialist Cuba economically and crush its revolution. The brutal U.S. trade embargo and travel ban are an integral part of this unceasing policy of aggression. So are the new — and unconstitutional — restrictions on travel to Cuba the Clinton administration imposed last August, which made it illegal even for Cuban-Americans to visit close relatives on the island and made travel harder for journalists and academics.

From the day the socialist character of the revolution became clear in 1960, the main problem for the U.S. rulers has been the fact that the working class in Cuba has confidence in itself and its communist vanguard. Today that working class in its majority still remains capable and determined to defend the revolution's socialist course and its government.

The problem for Washington has always been the Cuban workers' refusal to back down from their deter-

mination to speak and act, as Cuban president Fidel Castro put it in his 1979 speech to the United Nations, "on behalf of the children of the world who don't even have a piece of bread."

For the same reason that Clinton and company hate and fear the Cuban people and their revolutionary leadership, thousands of working people and youth in the United States and around the world are attracted to Cuba and its socialist revolution.

The example of the 70 youth from seven countries who went to Cuba this month with the international brigade can be emulated by thousands of others. These are the kind of people U.S. customs agents and other government officials want to intimidate by their arbitrary invocation of travel restrictions. But freedom of the press and the right of news editors to assign whomever they choose to report on news events anywhere in the world remain constitutionally protected rights. Any attempts by government officials to limit such freedoms must be met with vigorous protest.

Supporters of the Cuban revolution and all defenders of democratic rights should join the brigade members in their efforts to organize a flood of protest messages to the U.S. authorities demanding the passports be returned immediately and any threats of prosecution be dropped. Unionists and other workers, student groups, journalists and news organizations, women's rights and anti-racist groups, elected officials, and others can be won to join this campaign.

We must demand: Return the passports now! Lift the unconstitutional travel ban!

Protest Yellowknife frame-up

The murder conviction of Roger Warren, a framed-up gold miner, is part of the accelerating drive of Canada's capitalist rulers to make working people pay for the economic crisis of their system. Like their counterparts in other countries Canada's ruling rich must break the resistance to their efforts to sharply drive down wages and social entitlements if they are to be able to reverse falling profit rates and compete internationally.

Ottawa has sharply escalated its campaign to impose big new cutbacks in education, unemployment insurance, and other social services. Provincial governments are also carrying out major cuts in health care and welfare.

Canada's rulers are debating how far they can go without provoking widespread resistance. The January 25 protest by tens of thousands of students against the government's threat to double tuitions and the February 12 Montreal demonstration against cutbacks called by a number of trade unions shows the problem they face.

The determined battle waged by gold miners at Royal Oak's Giant mine in 1991-92 was a major obstacle to the bosses' drive against wages and working conditions. The government, cops, courts, and an army of

paid spies and thugs carried out a concerted drive to defeat Canada's most important labor fight in several years and break the union.

They failed. The miners succeeded in winning back their jobs and keeping their union intact. The frame-up of Roger Warren is aimed at undermining that victory. It is intended as a warning to every fighter and potential fighter that the capitalists will stop at nothing to reverse the gains won by working people through decades of struggle.

Frame-ups, increased cop brutality, and bloody wars waged against working people around the world are all part of the arsenal of brutal methods increasingly used by the rulers to terrorize, intimidate and break the resistance to their attacks.

That's why unionists and other fighters for democratic rights in Canada and internationally need to protest Roger Warren's conviction and demand that his appeal be upheld and the strike-related charges against other unionists be dropped. Most importantly, they can expose the frame-up and get out the truth about the miners' fight, especially to the thousands of new fighters today marching in the streets in opposition to the latest attacks by Canada's ruling class.

The worldwide gov't budget axe

From Democrats and Republicans in Washington to Christian Democrats in Germany; from Liberals in Ottawa to Social Democrats in Sweden, the political parties of the bourgeoisie have joined the same chorus: cut the social wage.

Entitlements that the labor movement has fought for over decades, the social wage consists of universal government programs that help provide a lifetime security net for workers and their families. Social Security, unemployment benefits, free health care, and workers compensation for injuries on the job are today on the chopping block in the name of deficit reduction.

The billionaire bondholders who are harping the loudest about fiscal discipline have only one thought in mind: getting paid. With the massive budget cutbacks being proposed, the working class is being forced to pay for growing risk capital in public bonds.

The social wage registers that the working class has been strong enough in the past to wrest back a small portion of the surplus it produces in the form of a social safety net.

Much to the bosses' chagrin, this cuts into their profit margins. When workers won Social Security in the United States, the average life expectancy was below the retirement age, so the employers didn't think it was such a big deal. But as life expectancy has risen, and the world market system entered an acute crisis, the wealthy are screaming for blood.

Governments hope to carry out their austerity measures without touching off large-scale protest. That's why demagoguery à la Ross Perot is now voiced. "Why should the rich receive Social Security?" or in the case of Sweden, a family allowance for children. "We don't need it," they say.

This argument aims to undercut the *universal* character of the social safety net. The intent is to introduce degrading means tested — and therefore restricted — programs. Instead of a *right* that every worker, every farmer, every child is entitled to, this will lead to the expansion of poorhouses, orphanages, prisons, and more.

Similarly, scapegoating targets the most vulnerable sections of the working class, such as those on welfare and immigrant workers, as being responsible for the economic breakdown.

The employers hope to tear apart the working class. By going after the worst-off sections first, their aim is to prepare the day when they will take on more and more the stronger sections of the working class.

In the past several decades, the labor movement has mostly confined itself to fighting for immediate wage increases and benefits for trade union members. But if the social wage, which benefits all working people, is not to be torn asunder, the unions will need to bring their power to bear, along with farmers and students, in a broader struggle against the government's axe.

Buchanan begins '96 presidential bid

BY GREG ROSENBERG

Advancing the theme of "faith, family, and country," ultrarightist politician Patrick Buchanan is preparing his 1996 presidential campaign. At the Louisiana state Republican convention in January, Buchanan finished second out of 12 contestants in a straw poll by delegates. Texas senator Phil Gramm came in first place with 902 votes, and Buchanan received 150.

Buchanan, a former speech writer for Richard Nixon, ran in the Republican primaries against George Bush in 1992. During the campaign he used radical demagoguery to gather cadre for an incipient fascist movement. He is setting up an "exploratory committee" to look into possible funding for the 1996 race. His supporters distributed "Buchanan '96" buttons at the Louisiana meeting.

In a speech that drew several ovations, Buchanan told the gathered Republicans that the so-called Contract with America, advanced by House Speaker Newt Gingrich, deserved support, but that more would be needed.

He returned to a favorite theme of scapegoating immigrant workers. "Can't we send a few thousand troops to defend the southern borders of the United States of America?" he intoned to cheers, saying that "one-third of the first 6,000 arrested in the riot in Los Angeles, burning down one of our greatest cities, were illegal aliens."

Buchanan highlighted his opposition to the GATT and NAFTA trade agreements, saying they violated American sovereignty. Cloaking himself in fake concern for workers who have lost their jobs, Buchanan asked, "What are we doing to our own people? They built this country. They're probably veterans. They wonder why it is their life is coming to an end, cause they're not going to get jobs making computers anywhere. That's not telling them the truth when you say that."

The rightist politician also attacked "the black-robed judges on the U.S. Supreme Court," for making rulings against school prayer and segregation. He accused unnamed forces of "trying to erase the memory of the American people," and "capture the children of this country."

Protesting the balance of imports and exports with Japan and China, Buchanan said "It's time the American nation started playing hardball with some of those fellows in Asia."

Miner convicted

Continued from front page

Second-degree murder carries an automatic life sentence, with possibility for parole after 10 years. The jury recommended that 51-year-old Warren be held a minimum of 20 years. The judge will decide this week.

The courtroom was packed during the reading of the verdict, mostly with media and supporters of the prosecution. Many Warren supporters were unable to reach the courthouse before the doors were locked. Some of the widows and others who backed the prosecution cheered as the verdict was read. They taunted miners supporting Warren outside the courthouse.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) organized a press conference for the widows after court closed. "All I wanted was to hear that man was guilty," said Judit Pandev, whose husband had crossed the line and was killed in the explosion.

Despite a 13-month investigation, the RCMP was unable to come up with one shred of evidence linking Warren to the blast. In the trial, presiding Judge Mark de Weerd admitted that all evidence in the case was "circumstantial."

The centerpiece of the frame-up was a false confession given by Warren one year after the blast under intense police pressure.

For 13 months after the explosion, hundreds of strikers, family members, and supporters of the strike were interrogated and harassed by the RCMP.

De Weerd instructed the jury for four hours. CAW miner Amos Simon, who works at Giant, noted, "in his instructions to the jury he discredited the defense witnesses. He played to the jury to get a conviction."

"In the ordinary course of human nature, it is typical that statements that weigh against oneself [like a confession] are likely to be true," de Weerd told the jurors. He urged that no juror hold out and force the case to retrial.

Jack MacPhee, a member of the United Steelworkers of America and a miner at the Con Mine, was angry over the verdict. "I should have known better when I looked at the jury and saw so many [government] bureaucrats. There weren't any blue-collar workers who are our peers and understood what we were facing," he said.

There is a sharp polarization of opinion in Yellowknife over Warren's guilt or innocence including among the miners themselves. The massive campaign by the rulers to frame Warren has had a real impact given the lack of any organized defense campaign led by the labor movement. Nevertheless, a significant layer of workers remain convinced of the condemned miner's innocence, including some who are determined to explain the truth about the frame-up.

"We're continuing the battle for justice and in a sense you can say we have just begun to fight," said Tim Bettger, another CAW miner.

IAM narrowly wins union vote at United

BY JANICE LYNN

WASHINGTON, D.C. — By a slim margin, the International Association of Machinists (IAM) recently defeated the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA), a company-minded outfit, in a runoff election at United Airlines.

The results of the union representation vote were announced by the National Mediation Board December 15. Of the 14,217 mechanics, cleaners, and other airline related workers eligible to vote — out of the 23,500 IAM-organized workers at United — 6,482 cast their ballots for the IAM and 5,923 for AMFA.

In recent years AMFA has challenged

already-weakened unions in the airline industry. It would have aided the divide-and-rule strategy of the companies in their attacks on wages and working conditions.

The election at United was called in early 1994 after IAM officials pushed through a six-year contract, which granted the company steep concessions in exchange for an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP).

"The close vote showed there was a lot of anger and frustration," said Dulles Airport cleaner Robert Gilchrist.

"If this helped put the IAM leadership on its toes," Dulles Airport mechanic Barry Daumit said, "then maybe something positive will have come out of it."

Many workers at different airports were simply glad that the election was finally over and hoped that everyone could now work together to build a stronger union.

Despite the victory of the IAM, the dissatisfaction that fueled the AMFA drive remains. The labor tops in the airline industry, including in the IAM, have no perspective for using union power to fight company demands for concessions.

The low-pay, part-time, and temporary jobs and reduced benefits that the companies are demanding and union officials have given in to are alienating many newer and younger workers from the union. It is also deepening the divisions among airline workers.

Flight attendants have been left to fend for themselves with their contract running out at a different time, making it more difficult for airline workers to fight together.

There has also been an erosion of soli-



Militant/Janice Lynn

United Airlines workers, organized by the IAM, protest plans to sell off the carrier's flight kitchens in May 1993. Signs refer to United boss Stephen Wolf. AMFA seeks to set up craft union and divide mechanics from other workers.

arity between workers at different airlines. Each company tells its workers that job security depends on wage and productivity concessions so "our" airline can compete with other carriers. Top IAM officials, as well as AMFA leaders, accept this framework and echo this pro-company line.

Nevertheless, many who voted for the IAM felt that workers at United would be better able to defend ourselves in future battles if we had a union that includes workers from different crafts.

"Working people are only going to turn this situation around by sticking together," is how one mechanic from Oakland, California, put it, pointing to a solidarity dinner his IAM local was hosting for workers from

Decatur, Illinois, on strike against Caterpillar and locked out by A.E. Staley. "That's what these workers are doing and it's up to us to support them."

The crisis in the airline industry is not being "solved" by the concessions the unions are granting to the bosses. More attacks on our wages and working conditions are in the offing, which will force more fights to protect our rights and living standards.

Out of these and other battles a more class-struggle-minded leadership will emerge in the union movement.

Janice Lynn is a member of IAM Local 1759 at Dulles Airport.

UNION TALK

the IAM at several major carriers, most aggressively at Northwest Airlines. The close vote at United was their best showing yet. It points to the very real possibility that they may win one of these elections in the future.

AMFA seeks to create a separate organization for mechanics, splitting them off from baggage handlers and other IAM-represented workers in the airlines. They urge mechanics to focus on protecting their own interests and argue that mechanics' wages are held down due to the "artificially high wage scale for untrained laborers."

If AMFA had succeeded at United, it would have been a further blow to the

Gov't conference lets airline bosses off the hook

BY MARY MARTIN

Washington, D.C. — In response to mounting public concern after seven fatal airline crashes in 1994, in which 264 people lost their lives, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Department of Transportation (DOT) convened a two-day invitation-only conference on airline safety here January 9-10.

The nearly 1,000 conference participants were mainly DOT and FAA officials, executives of airline companies, and representatives of aircraft manufacturing corporations. About 35 pilots attended. Only a handful of delegates from unions that organize flight crews, mechanics, ground crews, and reservation agents were on hand.

The airline crashes in 1994 took place in the context of an increased drive by airline companies to cut costs and regain profitability.

In the last four years U.S. airline companies had declared losses of \$12.8 billion, according to a Dec. 18, 1994 article in the *New York Times*. The same article

pointed out that the National Transportation Safety Board named the FAA itself as a factor in 93 crashes in an 11-year period, resulting in 536 fatalities. The FAA's negligence included failure to impose tougher rules regarding de-icing of aircraft and failure to enforce timely deadlines for airline companies to implement new safety measures.

Following a USAir Boeing 737 crash outside Pittsburgh in September where 132 people were killed — the fifth USAir crash since 1989 — a two-month investigation revealed numerous safety problems and evidence of company pressure on employees to cover up violations.

More accidents in future

At the conference many references were made to a recently published Boeing company study. The analysis projects that by the year 2013 aircraft crashes could take place at the rate of one every eight days based on the accident average of the last several years and predicts that airline traffic will grow at the rate of 5

percent per year.

A central refrain of the conference — as expressed in a speech given by Minnesota Democratic congressman James Oberstar, and remarks by DOT secretary Frederico Peña and FAA administrator David Hinson — was that "human performance," chiefly pilot error, was the main factor in airline crashes.

Two pilot organizations objected to the focus on pilot error, which they said did not address issues of crew rest. "It is widely known by anecdote that pilots often nod off at the controls unintentionally," read a statement issued by representatives of several pilot groups. "The FAA is seriously considering a proposal to authorize pilots to sleep at the controls rather than address the underlying fatigue problem."

Who will pay for safety?

According to a *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* article January 8, USAir had to replace faulty rudder control units in 40 airplanes or 15 percent of their fleet during a 12-

month period ending in April 1993.

At the closing news conference, reporters asked both Peña and Hinson who would pay for the cost of new safety measures, given the competitive climate and cost-cutting frenzy. They indicated tax incentives would be considered to encourage airlines to make the necessary changes.

Reflecting widespread skepticism of the government's will to take on the airline carriers and manufacturers one reporter asked, "Where economics comes first and budget cutting is taking place, what is the chance that safety can be prioritized?"

Meanwhile, among airline workers at Washington, D.C.'s National Airport the safety conference evoked considerable discussion.

One mechanic at Northwest Airlines, commenting on workers' responsibility for airline safety, said, "I'm not going to sign off on any airplane with safety problems; I get a paycheck whether the plane takes off or not."

LETTERS

Woman of the year

Women in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, in Canada are organizing a boycott of *Chatelaine* magazine after it chose Peggy Witte, the president of Royal Oak Mines, as its woman of the year. Royal Oak tried to break the union at its mine in Yellowknife in 1992 when it provoked an 18-month strike. Nine replacement miners were killed in an underground explosion during the strike. The company is presently appealing a decision by the Canada Labour Relations Board to reinstate dozens of miners who it fired during the strike.

"Its her leadership of her company which I hold responsible for tearing this community apart," said resident Lynn Fogwill.

Chatelaine is a fashion and lifestyle monthly magazine aimed at women and is the second largest circulation magazine in the country. Managing editor Ivor Shapiro did clarify that the maga-

zine's criteria for woman of the year does not take into account whether the person is a good role model.

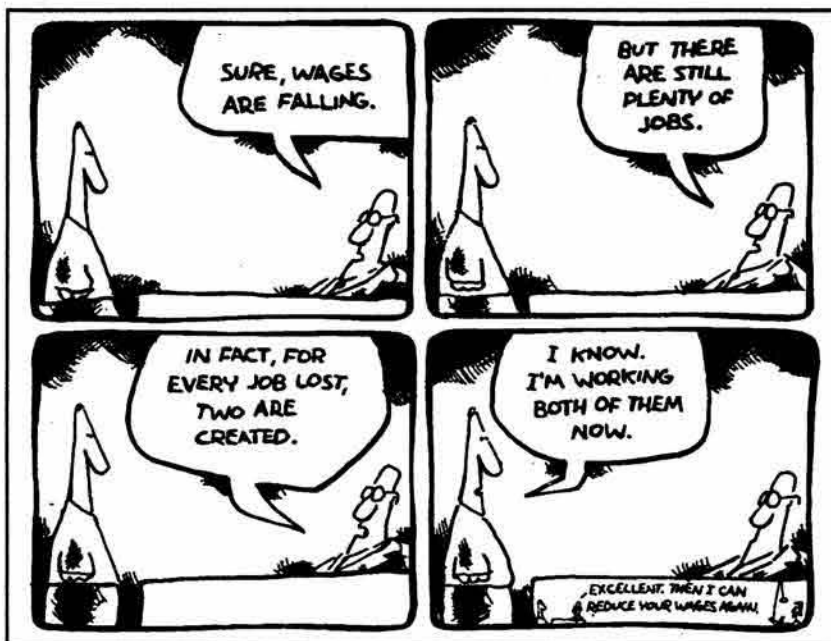
Roger Annis
Montreal, Quebec

Puerto Rican prisoner

Edwin Cortés, a Puerto Rican prisoner of war is seeking an end to his unjust confinement and has decided to appear before the parole board.

His appearance before the parole board is one additional activity in the ongoing campaign to free all Puerto Rican political prisoners and prisoners of war, a campaign that has spanned more than a decade.

The Amnesty Campaign for the 15 Puerto Rican political prisoners incarcerated in the United States explains that they were disproportionately sentenced; have already served more time than individuals accused of rape or murder; are being pun-



ished for their political beliefs; and that their continued incarceration violates basic of human rights. It is important that we all

express our support for Edwin's release.

On Edwin's behalf, we thank you once again for your support

and hope that we can continue to count on you in the future.

For more information write: PO Box 08397, Chicago, Illinois 60608-0397.

Committee of Family & Friends to Free Edwin Cortés
Chicago, Illinois

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of general interest to our readers. When writing to the *Militant* please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your last name.

The *Militant* prisoner fund makes it possible to send reduced-rate subscriptions to prisoners who can't pay for them. To help this important cause, send your contribution to Militant Prisoner Subscription Fund, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

Swedish gov't targets social wage

BY ANITA ÖSTLING

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — The new Social Democratic government in Sweden has escalated attacks on the social wage of working people. Dramatic cuts made up the government's first budget proposal presented in mid-January.

Stockholm's main argument for gutting the programs that make up the social wage is the need to reduce its budget deficit and the national debt. "We cannot get ourselves out of this economic morass without it hitting every single household," declared Sweden's Social Democratic finance minister, Göran Persson, as he outlined the austerity proposal.

Up until now, a number of allowances and entitlements in the social security system here have fully compensated for inflation. But beginning this year, compensation will be cut to 60 percent of the Cost Price Index. This primarily slashes into pensions for retired workers and the disabled. But it also affects guarantees to single parents and scholarships and loans for college and university students.

In 1994 a new compulsory payment was introduced for unemployment insurance. One percent was deducted from wages. This has now been abolished and contributions to unemployment insurance can be made voluntarily.

However, the government has introduced a compulsory payment to health-care and pension plans. This year 3 percent will be deducted from wages. An average industrial worker will be forced to fork over SKr500 a month (SKr1=US\$0.14). By the year 2000 the deduction will rise to 10 percent.

Health care and pension plans have previously been financed mainly through payments from the state and employers. This new step moves in the direction of turning a social security entitlement into an individual insurance.

The budget includes a proposal to slash family allowances for the first time since their introduction in 1948. This is an entitlement for every child regardless of the income of the parent. The allowance of SKr750 per month per child is reduced by SKr150.

From universal to 'means-tested'

The family allowance has come under fire in the last few years. The now defunct right-wing New Democratic Party argued against it. So do leading figures inside the Employers' Association. Hiding their intention to go after the working class they demagogically argue that the wealthy should not receive the subsidy.

The government is attempting to open the door to a means-tested allowance. It says that those hit hardest may be compensated through another program where they will be forced to qualify.

A worker at Volvo's Aero Engine plant outside of Stockholm pointed out that the universal character of the entitlement had



Unionists marched against austerity plans and unemployment in Stockholm in December 1993. New government says budget cuts will be "hitting every household."

been fought for "so that no children could be singled out as welfare recipients and separated from the rest."

The budget proposal also contains further cuts in sick leave and unemployment benefits.

In Sweden workers have the right to stay home with newborns for one year. But the compensation is now cut to 75 percent (down from 90) of wages, as is the compensation if you stay home with sick children.

Retired people will suffer from the belt-tightening. In addition to losing 40 percent of the compensation for inflation, funds for housing are cut and preferential prices for health care and medicines are largely taken away.

No unemployment benefits for youth

The most radical step in the budget would exclude people under 20 from jobless benefits. To qualify for unemployment compensation a worker must have been a member of a union for one year and

been employed for at least five months of the year. But those under 20 who meet this criteria still won't qualify.

Unemployment in Sweden stands at more than 12 percent. The government projects bringing official joblessness down to 10.8 percent by 1998. Right now there is an upturn in the economy and hiring is going on in the exporting sector. Overtime is at record levels. But the domestic market is slow. Construction is at a virtual standstill.

During last year's election campaign all political parties advanced platforms focusing on the budget deficit and the national debt. They demanded concessions by working people to "save the Swedish state from bankruptcy." This campaign particularly targeted young people, who were told to help the older generations to stop spending, which was said to be the reason for the deficit.

Björn Wolrath, director of the Skandia insurance company, campaigned against buying bonds issued by the Swedish state

until the government took painful measures to lower the budget deficit. This led to increased interest rates. Swedish insurance companies are some of the biggest creditors to the state.

Immediately following the budget proposal announcement Wolrath came out against it claiming the government had not gone far enough. The cuts amounted to only SKr22 billion. Wolrath demands SKr60 billion before he'll buy.

"Swedish cuts fail to convince markets," read the headline of the London *Financial Times* reporting on the Social Democrats' budget plans.

Over the past few years capitalists in Sweden have been on a crusade to intensify exploitation. Gutting the social wage is one element. The maintenance of high unemployment is another. About 65 percent of all new jobs during the upturn are temporary. The capitalists want more flexible working hours and the introduction of a two-tier wage system. But the employers have yet to transform this into forcing workers to accept radically worsened conditions on the job.

At a recent Militant Labor Forum here, several young people described the conditions under which they work.

Two young women spoke about their special youth training jobs, one in a child-care center and the other in a record store. They each make \$500 a month and work full-time. The employer presses for overtime and threatens them with bad references if they don't accept. They have a right to use eight hours every month to go job hunting but the employer is against it. They are not allowed to join the union or qualify for unemployment benefits.

The government has also cut allowances for high school students. High school students were the first to respond to the budget plan. They organized demonstrations to protest the worsening conditions for youth. Between 3,000 and 5,000 young people participated in a demonstration in Stockholm. More protests are planned.

Anita Östling is a member of the Transport Workers Union Local 46 at Volvo Aero Engine Services in Stockholm.

New Zealand: 'The hospitals should be publicly owned services, not businesses'

BY RUTH GRAY

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand — "Hospitals should be publicly owned services, not businesses, that will give care that is appropriate, accessible, and more accountable," Koa Saxby told participants at a recent Militant Labor Forum here opposing government attacks on the health system. Saxby is a spokesperson for the Canterbury Health Coalition.

In July 1993, New Zealand's National Party government set up 23 Crown Health Enterprises (CHEs) to run public hospitals nationwide, with the goal of reorganizing them into commercial enterprises.

One of the CHEs' cost-cutting targets has been rural hospitals. In the recent period these proposed cutbacks have provoked some resistance. Some 3,000 residents of the town of Ashburton demonstrated December 11 against planned cuts to surgical services at the local hospital. This was the third large protest there in five months. The largest one drew 4,000 people in September.

In a further attack on free health care, the government announced guidelines for the treatment of paying patients at public hospitals last September. At the same time statistics revealed that waiting lists for public hospitals were growing by an average of 13 new cases a day.

Government cost cutting has also targeted hospital workers. In November

1994, catering and orderly staff at Christchurch Women's Hospital signed an employment contract that included cuts to overtime rates and deterioration of working conditions. One orderly reported it amounted to a NZ\$9,000 a year drop in pay (NZ\$1=US\$0.64). The CHE for the Canterbury region, Healthlink South, threatened to lock out the workers if they refused to sign.

The lack of funding for psychiatric patients was also highlighted in the media here recently. The Tenants Protection Association described the living conditions of former patients to *The Press* as "Dickensian squalor." In one account a man with a psychiatric disability and heart condition was found renting a former coal shed. During heavy rains last winter he had been living with eight inches of water on the floor.

In November 1994 Healthlink South announced plans to close Templeton Hospital for mentally retarded people. Under the proposal, the majority of the 450 clients are to be moved into community care facilities. Those who are considered unfit to live in the community will be moved to the former nurses' residence at Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) in Christchurch.

These plans have been greeted by protest from both parents and staff at Templeton. At the Militant Labor Forum a spokesperson for the Templeton Parents


Association, Alison Adams, said Healthlink South is "opting out of the service it should be providing." She rejected the claim that putting most of the patients into community care will provide a normal lifestyle as many of them have multiple handicaps and need more attention.

Adams told forum participants that the parents association also considered the former nurses' residence at PMH unsuitable for those patients who are to remain institutionalized. She pointed out that the building is a high rise with elevators that can only fit one wheelchair. The plan is to keep the immobile patients on the top floor. In the event of a fire, problems evacuating patients "would be insurmountable," she said. Parents also fear that the more mobile patients will be sedated to keep them under control.

The right to free universal health care in public hospitals in New Zealand was a social gain won by the working class earlier this century. Free education, pensions, unemployment insurance, sickness pay, and other benefits meant that working people had some guarantee of economic and social security throughout their lifetimes. Today, as capitalist profit rates decline, these rights are increasingly coming under attack.

Ruth Gray is a member of the Engineers Union in Christchurch.

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